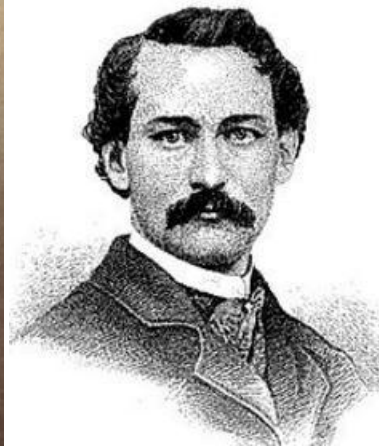


STORIES BY MEN - JANUARY 2017

A dozen tales of romance, wit, and adventure from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries.

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AMATEUR NIGHT

by Jack London

The elevator boy smiled knowingly to himself. When he took her up, he had noted the sparkle in her eyes, the color in her cheeks. His little cage had quite warmed with the glow of her repressed eagerness. And now, on the down trip, it was glacier-like. The sparkle and the color were gone. She was frowning, and what little he could see of her eyes was cold and steel-gray. Oh, he knew the symptoms, he did. He was an observer, and he knew it, too, and some day, when he was big enough, he was going to be a reporter, sure. And in the meantime he studied the procession of life as it streamed up and down eighteen sky-scraper floors in his elevator car. He slid the door open for her sympathetically and watched her trip determinedly out into the street.

There was a robustness in her carriage which came of the soil rather than of the city pavement. But it was a robustness in a finer than the wonted sense, a vigorous daintiness, it might be called, which gave an impression of virility with none of the womanly left out. It told of a heredity of seekers and fighters, of people that worked stoutly with head and hand, of ghosts that reached down out of the misty past and moulded and made her to be a doer of things.

But she was a little angry, and a great deal hurt. "I can guess what you would tell me," the editor had kindly but firmly interrupted her lengthy preamble in the long-looked-forward-to interview just ended. "And you have told me enough," he had gone on (heartlessly, she was sure, as she went over the conversation in its freshness). "You have done no newspaper work. You are undrilled, undisciplined, unhammered into shape.

You have received a high-school education, and possibly topped it off with normal school or college. You have stood well in English. Your friends have all told you how cleverly you write, and how beautifully, and so forth and so forth. You think you can do newspaper work, and you want me to put you on. Well, I am sorry, but there are no openings. If you knew how crowded--"

"But if there are no openings," she had interrupted, in turn, "how did those who are in, get in? How am I to show that I am eligible to get in?"

"They made themselves indispensable," was the terse response. "Make yourself indispensable."

"But how can I, if I do not get the chance?"

"Make your chance."

"But how?" she had insisted, at the same time privately deeming him a most unreasonable man.

"How? That is your business, not mine," he said conclusively, rising in token that the interview was at an end. "I must inform you, my dear young lady, that there have been at least eighteen other aspiring young ladies here this week, and that I have not the time to tell each and every one of them how. The function I perform on this paper is hardly that of instructor in a school of journalism."

She caught an outbound car, and ere she descended from it she had conned the conversation over and over again. "But how?" she repeated to herself, as she climbed the three flights of stairs to the rooms where she and her sister "bach'ed." "But how?" And so she continued to put the interrogation, for the stubborn Scotch blood, though many times removed from Scottish soil, was still strong in her. And, further, there was need that she should learn how. Her sister Letty and she had come up from an interior town to the city to make their way in the world. John Wyman was land-poor. Disastrous business enterprises had burdened his acres and forced his two girls, Edna and Letty, into doing something for themselves. A year of school-teaching and of night-study of shorthand and typewriting had capitalized their city project and fitted them for the venture, which same venture was turning out anything but successful. The city seemed crowded with inexperienced stenographers and typewriters, and they had nothing but their own inexperience to offer. Edna's secret ambition had been journalism; but she had planned a clerical position first, so that she might have time and space in which to determine where and on what line of journalism she would embark. But the clerical position had not been forthcoming, either for Letty or her, and day by day their little hoard dwindled, though the room rent

remained normal and the stove consumed coal with undiminished voracity. And it was a slim little hoard by now.

"There's Max Irwin," Letty said, talking it over. "He's a journalist with a national reputation. Go and see him, Ed. He knows how, and he should be able to tell you how."

"But I don't know him," Edna objected.

"No more than you knew the editor you saw to-day."

"Y-e-s," (long and judicially), "but that's different."

"Not a bit different from the strange men and women you'll interview when you've learned how," Letty encouraged.

"I hadn't looked at it in that light," Edna conceded. "After all, where's the difference between interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for some paper, or interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for myself? It will be practice, too. I'll go and look him up in the directory."

"Letty, I know I can write if I get the chance," she announced decisively a moment later. "I just FEEL that I have the feel of it, if you know what I mean."

And Letty knew and nodded. "I wonder what he is like?" she asked softly.

"I'll make it my business to find out," Edna assured her; "and I'll let you know inside forty-eight hours."

Letty clapped her hands. "Good! That's the newspaper spirit! Make it twenty-four hours and you are perfect!"

* * *

"--and I am very sorry to trouble you," she concluded the statement of her case to Max Irwin, famous war correspondent and veteran journalist.

"Not at all," he answered, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "If you don't do your own talking, who's to do it for you? Now I understand your predicament precisely. You want to get on the Intelligencer, you want to get in at once, and you have had no previous experience. In the first place, then, have you any pull? There are a dozen men in the city, a line from whom would be an open-sesame. After that you would stand or fall by your own ability. There's Senator Longbridge, for instance, and Claus Inskeep the street-car magnate, and Lane, and McChesney--" He paused, with voice suspended.

"I am sure I know none of them," she answered despondently.

"It's not necessary. Do you know any one that knows them? or any one that knows any one else that knows them?"

Edna shook her head.

"Then we must think of something else," he went on, cheerfully. "You'll have to do something yourself. Let me see."

He stopped and thought for a moment, with closed eyes and wrinkled forehead. She was watching him, studying him intently, when his blue eyes opened with a snap and his face suddenly brightened.

"I have it! But no, wait a minute."

And for a minute it was his turn to study her. And study her he did, till she could feel her cheeks flushing under his gaze.

"You'll do, I think, though it remains to be seen," he said enigmatically. "It will show the stuff that's in you, besides, and it will be a better claim upon the Intelligencer people than all the lines from all the senators and magnates in the world. The thing for you is to do Amateur Night at the Loops."

"I--I hardly understand," Edna said, for his suggestion conveyed no meaning to her. "What are the 'Loops'? and what is 'Amateur Night'?"

"I forgot you said you were from the interior. But so much the better, if you've only got the journalistic grip. It will be a first impression, and first impressions are always unbiased, unprejudiced, fresh, vivid. The Loops are out on the rim of the city, near the Park,--a place of diversion. There's a scenic railway, a water toboggan slide, a concert band, a theatre, wild animals, moving pictures, and so forth and so forth. The common people go there to look at the animals and enjoy themselves, and the other people go there to enjoy themselves by watching the common people enjoy themselves. A democratic, fresh-air-breathing, frolicking affair, that's what the Loops are.

"But the theatre is what concerns you. It's vaudeville. One turn follows another--jugglers, acrobats, rubber-jointed wonders, fire-dancers, coon-song artists, singers, players, female impersonators, sentimental soloists, and so forth and so forth. These people are professional vaudevillists. They make their living that way. Many are excellently paid. Some are free rovers, doing a turn wherever they can get an opening, at the Obermann, the Orpheus, the Alcatraz, the Louvre, and so forth and so forth. Others cover circuit pretty well all over the country. An interesting phase of life, and the pay is big enough to

attract many aspirants.

"Now the management of the Loops, in its bid for popularity, instituted what is called 'Amateur Night'; that is to say, twice a week, after the professionals have done their turns, the stage is given over to the aspiring amateurs. The audience remains to criticise. The populace becomes the arbiter of art--or it thinks it does, which is the same thing; and it pays its money and is well pleased with itself, and Amateur Night is a paying proposition to the management.

"But the point of Amateur Night, and it is well to note it, is that these amateurs are not really amateurs. They are paid for doing their turn. At the best, they may be termed 'professional amateurs.' It stands to reason that the management could not get people to face a rampant audience for nothing, and on such occasions the audience certainly goes mad. It's great fun--for the audience. But the thing for you to do, and it requires nerve, I assure you, is to go out, make arrangements for two turns, (Wednesday and Saturday nights, I believe), do your two turns, and write it up for the Sunday Intelligencer."

"But--but," she quavered, "I--I--" and there was a suggestion of disappointment and tears in her voice.

"I see," he said kindly. "You were expecting something else, something different, something better. We all do at first. But remember the admiral of the Queen's Na-vee, who swept the floor and polished up the handle of the big front door. You must face the drudgery of apprenticeship or quit right now. What do you say?"

The abruptness with which he demanded her decision startled her. As she faltered, she could see a shade of disappointment beginning to darken his face.

"In a way it must be considered a test," he added encouragingly. "A severe one, but so much the better. Now is the time. Are you game?"

"I'll try," she said faintly, at the same time making a note of the directness, abruptness, and haste of these city men with whom she was coming in contact.

"Good! Why, when I started in, I had the dreariest, deadliest details imaginable. And after that, for a weary time, I did the police and divorce courts. But it all came well in the end and did me good. You are luckier in making your start with Sunday work. It's not particularly great. What of it? Do it. Show the stuff you're made of, and you'll get a call for better work--better class and better pay. Now you go out this afternoon to the Loops, and engage to do two turns."

"But what kind of turns can I do?" Edna asked dubiously.

"Do? That's easy. Can you sing? Never mind, don't need to sing. Screech, do anything--that's what you're paid for, to afford amusement, to give bad art for the populace to howl down. And when you do your turn, take some one along for chaperon. Be afraid of no one. Talk up. Move about among the amateurs waiting their turn, pump them, study them, photograph them in your brain. Get the atmosphere, the color, strong color, lots of it. Dig right in with both hands, and get the essence of it, the spirit, the significance. What does it mean? Find out what it means. That's what you're there for. That's what the readers of the Sunday Intelligencer want to know.

"Be terse in style, vigorous of phrase, apt, concretely apt, in similitude. Avoid platitudes and commonplaces. Exercise selection. Seize upon things salient, eliminate the rest, and you have pictures. Paint those pictures in words and the Intelligencer will have you. Get hold of a few back numbers, and study the Sunday Intelligencer feature story. Tell it all in the opening paragraph as advertisement of contents, and in the contents tell it all over again. Then put a snapper at the end, so if they're crowded for space they can cut off your contents anywhere, reattach the snapper, and the story will still retain form. There, that's enough. Study the rest out for yourself."

They both rose to their feet, Edna quite carried away by his enthusiasm and his quick, jerky sentences, bristling with the things she wanted to know.

"And remember, Miss Wyman, if you're ambitious, that the aim and end of journalism is not the feature article. Avoid the rut. The feature is a trick. Master it, but don't let it master you. But master it you must; for if you can't learn to do a feature well, you can never expect to do anything better. In short, put your whole self into it, and yet, outside of it, above it, remain yourself, if you follow me. And now good luck to you."

They had reached the door and were shaking hands.

"And one thing more," he interrupted her thanks, "let me see your copy before you turn it in. I may be able to put you straight here and there."

Edna found the manager of the Loops a full-fleshed, heavy-jowled man, bushy of eyebrow and generally belligerent of aspect, with an absent-minded scowl on his face and a black cigar stuck in the midst thereof. Symes was his name, she had learned, Ernst Symes.

"Whatcher turn?" he demanded, ere half her brief application had left

her lips.

"Sentimental soloist, soprano," she answered promptly, remembering Irwin's advice to talk up.

"Whatcher name?" Mr. Symes asked, scarcely deigning to glance at her.

She hesitated. So rapidly had she been rushed into the adventure that she had not considered the question of a name at all.

"Any name? Stage name?" he bellowed impatiently.

"Nan Bellayne," she invented on the spur of the moment.

"B-e-l-l-a-y-n-e. Yes, that's it."

He scribbled it into a notebook. "All right. Take your turn Wednesday and Saturday."

"How much do I get?" Edna demanded.

"Two-an'-a-half a turn. Two turns, five. Getcher pay first Monday after second turn."

And without the simple courtesy of "Good day," he turned his back on her and plunged into the newspaper he had been reading when she entered.

Edna came early on Wednesday evening, Letty with her, and in a telescope basket her costume--a simple affair. A plaid shawl borrowed from the washerwoman, a ragged scrubbing skirt borrowed from the charwoman, and a gray wig rented from a costumer for twenty-five cents a night, completed the outfit; for Edna had elected to be an old Irishwoman singing broken-heartedly after her wandering boy.

Though they had come early, she found everything in uproar. The main performance was under way, the orchestra was playing and the audience intermittently applauding. The infusion of the amateurs clogged the working of things behind the stage, crowded the passages, dressing rooms, and wings, and forced everybody into everybody else's way. This was particularly distasteful to the professionals, who carried themselves as befitted those of a higher caste, and whose behavior toward the pariah amateurs was marked by hauteur and even brutality. And Edna, bullied and elbowed and shoved about, clinging desperately to her basket and seeking a dressing room, took note of it all.

A dressing room she finally found, jammed with three other amateur "ladies," who were "making up" with much noise, high-pitched voices, and squabbling over a lone mirror. Her own make-up was so simple that it was quickly accomplished, and she left the trio of ladies holding an armed

truce while they passed judgment upon her. Letty was close at her shoulder, and with patience and persistence they managed to get a nook in one of the wings which commanded a view of the stage.

A small, dark man, dapper and debonair, swallow-tailed and top-hatted, was waltzing about the stage with dainty, mincing steps, and in a thin little voice singing something or other about somebody or something evidently pathetic. As his waning voice neared the end of the lines, a large woman, crowned with an amazing wealth of blond hair, thrust rudely past Edna, trod heavily on her toes, and shoved her contemptuously to the side. "Bloomin' hamateur!" she hissed as she went past, and the next instant she was on the stage, graciously bowing to the audience, while the small, dark man twirled extravagantly about on his tiptoes.

"Hello, girls!"

This greeting, drawled with an inimitable vocal caress in every syllable, close in her ear, caused Edna to give a startled little jump. A smooth-faced, moon-faced young man was smiling at her good-naturedly. His "make-up" was plainly that of the stock tramp of the stage, though the inevitable whiskers were lacking.

"Oh, it don't take a minute to slap'm on," he explained, divining the search in her eyes and waving in his hand the adornment in question. "They make a feller sweat," he explained further. And then, "What's yer turn?"

"Soprano--sentimental," she answered, trying to be offhand and at ease.

"Whata you doin' it for?" he demanded directly.

"For fun; what else?" she countered.

"I just sized you up for that as soon as I put eyes on you. You ain't graftin' for a paper, are you?"

"I never met but one editor in my life," she replied evasively, "and I, he--well, we didn't get on very well together."

"Hittin' 'm for a job?"

Edna nodded carelessly, though inwardly anxious and cudgelling her brains for something to turn the conversation.

"What'd he say?"

"That eighteen other girls had already been there that week."

"Gave you the icy mit, eh?" The moon-faced young man laughed and slapped his thighs. "You see, we're kind of suspicious. The Sunday papers 'd like to get Amateur Night done up brown in a nice little package, and the manager don't see it that way. Gets wild-eyed at the thought of it."

"And what's your turn?" she asked.

"Who? me? Oh, I'm doin' the tramp act tonight. I'm Charley Welsh, you know."

She felt that by the mention of his name he intended to convey to her complete enlightenment, but the best she could do was to say politely, "Oh, is that so?"

She wanted to laugh at the hurt disappointment which came into his face, but concealed her amusement.

"Come, now," he said brusquely, "you can't stand there and tell me you've never heard of Charley Welsh? Well, you must be young. Why, I'm an Only, the Only amateur at that. Sure, you must have seen me. I'm everywhere. I could be a professional, but I get more dough out of it by doin' the amateur."

"But what's an 'Only'?" she queried. "I want to learn."

"Sure," Charley Welsh said gallantly. "I'll put you wise. An 'Only' is a nonpareil, the feller that does one kind of a turn better'n any other feller. He's the Only, see?"

And Edna saw.

"To get a line on the biz," he continued, "throw yer lamps on me. I'm the Only all-round amateur. To-night I make a bluff at the tramp act. It's harder to bluff it than to really do it, but then it's acting, it's amateur, it's art. See? I do everything, from Sheeny monologue to team song and dance and Dutch comedian. Sure, I'm Charley Welsh, the Only Charley Welsh."

And in this fashion, while the thin, dark man and the large, blond woman warbled dulcetly out on the stage and the other professionals followed in their turns, did Charley Welsh put Edna wise, giving her much miscellaneous and superfluous information and much that she stored away for the Sunday Intelligencer.

"Well, tra la loo," he said suddenly. "There's his highness chasin' you up. Yer first on the bill. Never mind the row when you go on. Just finish yer turn like a lady."

It was at that moment that Edna felt her journalistic ambition departing from her, and was aware of an overmastering desire to be somewhere else. But the stage manager, like an ogre, barred her retreat. She could hear the opening bars of her song going up from the orchestra and the noises of the house dying away to the silence of anticipation.

"Go ahead," Letty whispered, pressing her hand; and from the other side came the peremptory "Don't flunk!" of Charley Welsh.

But her feet seemed rooted to the floor, and she leaned weakly against a shift scene. The orchestra was beginning over again, and a lone voice from the house piped with startling distinctness:

"Puzzle picture! Find Nannie!"

A roar of laughter greeted the sally, and Edna shrank back. But the strong hand of the manager descended on her shoulder, and with a quick, powerful shove propelled her out on to the stage. His hand and arm had flashed into full view, and the audience, grasping the situation, thundered its appreciation. The orchestra was drowned out by the terrible din, and Edna could see the bows scraping away across the violins, apparently without sound. It was impossible for her to begin in time, and as she patiently waited, arms akimbo and ears straining for the music, the house let loose again (a favorite trick, she afterward learned, of confusing the amateur by preventing him or her from hearing the orchestra).

But Edna was recovering her presence of mind. She became aware, pit to dome, of a vast sea of smiling and fun-distorted faces, of vast roars of laughter, rising wave on wave, and then her Scotch blood went cold and angry. The hard-working but silent orchestra gave her the cue, and, without making a sound, she began to move her lips, stretch forth her arms, and sway her body, as though she were really singing. The noise in the house redoubled in the attempt to drown her voice, but she serenely went on with her pantomime. This seemed to continue an interminable time, when the audience, tiring of its prank and in order to hear, suddenly stilled its clamor, and discovered the dumb show she had been making. For a moment all was silent, save for the orchestra, her lips moving on without a sound, and then the audience realized that it had been sold, and broke out afresh, this time with genuine applause in acknowledgment of her victory. She chose this as the happy moment for her exit, and with a bow and a backward retreat, she was off the stage in Letty's arms.

The worst was past, and for the rest of the evening she moved about among the amateurs and professionals, talking, listening, observing, finding out what it meant and taking mental notes of it all. Charley Welsh constituted himself her preceptor and guardian angel, and so well

did he perform the self-allotted task that when it was all over she felt fully prepared to write her article. But the proposition had been to do two turns, and her native pluck forced her to live up to it. Also, in the course of the intervening days, she discovered fleeting impressions that required verification; so, on Saturday, she was back again, with her telescope basket and Letty.

The manager seemed looking for her, and she caught an expression of relief in his eyes when he first saw her. He hurried up, greeted her, and bowed with a respect ludicrously at variance with his previous ogre-like behavior. And as he bowed, across his shoulders she saw Charley Welsh deliberately wink.

But the surprise had just begun. The manager begged to be introduced to her sister, chatted entertainingly with the pair of them, and strove greatly and anxiously to be agreeable. He even went so far as to give Edna a dressing room to herself, to the unspeakable envy of the three other amateur ladies of previous acquaintance. Edna was nonplussed, and it was not till she met Charley Welsh in the passage that light was thrown on the mystery.

"Hello!" he greeted her. "On Easy Street, eh? Everything slidin' your way."

She smiled brightly.

"Thinks yer a female reporter, sure. I almost split when I saw'm layin' himself out sweet an' pleasin'. Honest, now, that ain't yer graft, is it?"

"I told you my experience with editors," she parried. "And honest now, it was honest, too."

But the Only Charley Welsh shook his head dubiously. "Not that I care a rap," he declared. "And if you are, just gimme a couple of lines of notice, the right kind, good ad, you know. And if yer not, why yer all right anyway. Yer not our class, that's straight."

After her turn, which she did this time with the nerve of an old campaigner, the manager returned to the charge; and after saying nice things and being generally nice himself, he came to the point.

"You'll treat us well, I hope," he said insinuatingly. "Do the right thing by us, and all that?"

"Oh," she answered innocently, "you couldn't persuade me to do another turn; I know I seemed to take and that you'd like to have me, but I really, really can't."

"You know what I mean," he said, with a touch of his old bulldozing manner.

"No, I really won't," she persisted. "Vaudeville's too--too wearing on the nerves, my nerves, at any rate."

Whereat he looked puzzled and doubtful, and forbore to press the point further.

But on Monday morning, when she came to his office to get her pay for the two turns, it was he who puzzled her.

"You surely must have mistaken me," he lied glibly. "I remember saying something about paying your car fare. We always do this, you know, but we never, never pay amateurs. That would take the life and sparkle out of the whole thing. No, Charley Welsh was stringing you. He gets paid nothing for his turns. No amateur gets paid. The idea is ridiculous. However, here's fifty cents. It will pay your sister's car fare also. And,"--very suavely,--"speaking for the Loops, permit me to thank you for the kind and successful contribution of your services."

That afternoon, true to her promise to Max Irwin, she placed her typewritten copy into his hands. And while he ran over it, he nodded his head from time to time, and maintained a running fire of commendatory remarks: "Good!--that's it!--that's the stuff!--psychology's all right!--the very idea!--you've caught it!--excellent!--missed it a bit here, but it'll go--that's vigorous!--strong!--vivid!--pictures! pictures!--excellent!--most excellent!"

And when he had run down to the bottom of the last page, holding out his hand: "My dear Miss Wyman, I congratulate you. I must say you have exceeded my expectations, which, to say the least, were large. You are a journalist, a natural journalist. You've got the grip, and you're sure to get on. The Intelligencer will take it, without doubt, and take you too. They'll have to take you. If they don't, some of the other papers will get you."

"But what's this?" he queried, the next instant, his face going serious. "You've said nothing about receiving the pay for your turns, and that's one of the points of the feature. I expressly mentioned it, if you'll remember."

"It will never do," he said, shaking his head ominously, when she had explained. "You simply must collect that money somehow. Let me see. Let me think a moment."

"Never mind, Mr. Irwin," she said. "I've bothered you enough. Let me use

your 'phone, please, and I'll try Mr. Ernst Symes again."

He vacated his chair by the desk, and Edna took down the receiver.

"Charley Welsh is sick," she began, when the connection had been made.

"What? No I'm not Charley Welsh. Charley Welsh is sick, and his sister wants to know if she can come out this afternoon and draw his pay for him?"

"Tell Charley Welsh's sister that Charley Welsh was out this morning, and drew his own pay," came back the manager's familiar tones, crisp with asperity.

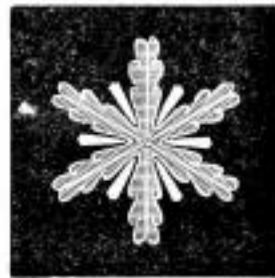
"All right," Edna went on. "And now Nan Bellayne wants to know if she and her sister can come out this afternoon and draw Nan Bellayne's pay?"

"What'd he say? What'd he say?" Max Irwin cried excitedly, as she hung up.

"That Nan Bellayne was too much for him, and that she and her sister could come out and get her pay and the freedom of the Loops, to boot."

"One thing, more," he interrupted her thanks at the door, as on her previous visit. "Now that you've shown the stuff you're made of, I should esteem it, ahem, a privilege to give you a line myself to the Intelligencer people."

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Moon-Face and Other Stories*, by Jack London



GRANDPAPA'S WOLF STORY

by Edward William Thomson

"Tell us a story, grandpapa."

"One that will last all the evening, chickens?"

"Yes, grandpapa, darling," said Jenny, while Jimmy clapped hands.

"What about?" said the old lumber king.

"About when you were a boy."

"When I was a boy," said the old gentleman, taking Jenny on his knee and putting his arm round Jimmy, "the boys and girls were as fond of stories as they are now. Once when I was a boy I said to my grandfather, 'Tell me a story, grandpa,' and he replied, 'When I was a boy the boys were as fond of stories as they are now; for once when I was a boy I said to my grandfather, 'Tell me a story, grandpa,--'"".

"Why, it seems to go on just the same story, grandpapa," said Jenny.

"That's not the end of it, Jenny, dear," said grandpapa.

"No-o?" said Jenny, dubiously.

Jimmy said nothing. He lived with his grandfather, and knew his ways. Jenny came on visits only, and was not well enough acquainted with the old gentleman to know that he would soon tire of the old joke, and reward patient children by a good story.

"Shall I go on with the story, Jenny?" said grandpapa.

"Oh, yes, grandpapa!"

"Well, then, when _that_ grandpa was a boy, he said to _his_ grandfather, 'Tell me a story, grandpapa,' and his grandfather replied--"

Jenny soon listened with a demure smile of attention.

"Do you like this story, dear?" said grandpapa, after pursuing the repetition for some minutes longer.

"I shall, grandpapa, darling. It must be very good when you come to the grandfather that told it. I like to think of all my grandfathers, and great, great, great, greater, greatest, great, great-grandpapas all telling the same story."

"Yes, it's a genuine family story, Jenny, and you're a little witch." The old gentleman kissed her. "Well, where was I? Oh, now I remember! And _that_ grandpapa said to his grandfather, 'Tell me a story, grandpapa,' and his grandpapa replied, 'When I was a young fellow--'""

"Now it's beginning!" cried Jimmy, clapping his hands, and shifting to

an easier attitude by the old man's easy-chair.

Grandpapa looked comically at Jimmy, and said, "His grandfather replied, 'When I was a young fellow--'"

The faces of the children became woful again.

"One rainy day I took my revolver--"

"Revolver! Grandpapa!" cried Jenny.

"Yes, dear."

"An American revolver, grandpapa?"

"Certainly, dear."

"And did he tell the story in English?"

"Yes, pet."

"But, grandpapa, _darling_, that grandpapa was seventy-three grandpapas back!"

"About that, my dear."

"I kept count, grandpapa."

"And don't you like good old-fashioned stories, Jenny?"

"Oh, yes, grandpapa, but _revolvers_ --and _Americans_ --and the _English_ language! Why, it was more than twenty-two hundred years ago, grandpapa, darling!"

"Ha! ha! You never thought of that, Jimmy! Oh, you've been at school, Miss Bright-eyes! Kiss me, you little rogue. Now listen!

"When _I_ was a young fellow--"

"You yourself, grandpapa?"

"Yes, Jenny."

"I'm so glad it was you yourself! I like my _own_ grandpapa's stories best of all."

"Thank you, my dear. After that I must be _very_ entertaining. Yes, I'll tell my best story of all--and Jimmy has never heard it. Well,

when I was a young fellow of seventeen I was clerk in a lumber shanty on the Sheboiobonzhe-gunpashageshickawigamog River."

"How did you _ever_ learn that name, grandpapa, darling?" cried Jenny.

"Oh, I could learn things in those days. Remembering it is the difficulty, dear--see if it isn't. I'll give you a nice new ten-dollar bill if you tell me that name to-morrow."

Jenny bent her brows and tried so hard to recall the syllables that she almost lost part of the story. Grandpapa went steadily on:--

"One day in February, when it was too rainy for the men to work, and just rainy enough to go deer-shooting if you hadn't had fresh meat for five months, I took to the woods with my gun, revolver, hatchet, and dinner. All the fore part of the day I failed to get a shot, though I saw many deer on the hemlock ridges of Sheboi--that's the way it begins, Jenny, and Sheboi we called it.

"But late in the afternoon I killed a buck. I cut off a haunch, lifted the carcass into the low boughs of a spruce, and started for camp, six miles away, across snowy hills and frozen lakes. The snow-shoeing was heavy, and I feared I should not get in before dark. The Sheboi country was infested with wolves--"

"Bully! It's a wolf story!" said Jimmy. Jenny shuddered with delight.

"As I went along you may be sure I never thought my grandchildren would be pleased to have me in danger of being eaten up by wolves."

Jenny looked shocked at the imputation. Grandpapa watched her with twinkling eyes. When she saw he was joking, she cried: "But you weren't eaten, grandpapa. You were too brave."

"Ah, I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps I'd better not tell the story. You'll have a worse opinion of my courage, my dear."

"Of course you _had_ to run from _wolves_, grandpapa!" said the little girl.

"I'll bet grandpapa didn't run then, miss," said Jimmy. "I'll bet he shot them with his gun."

"He couldn't--could you, grandpapa? There were too many. Of course grandpapa _had_ to run. That wasn't being cowardly. It was just--just--_running_."

"No, Jenny, I didn't run a yard."

"Didn't I tell you?" cried Jimmy. "Grandpapa shot them with his gun."

"You're mistaken, Jimmy."

"Then you must--No, for you're here--you weren't eaten up?" said wondering Jenny.

"No, dear, I wasn't eaten up."

"Oh, I know! The wolves didn't come!" cried Jimmy, who remembered one of his grandpapa's stories as having ended in that unhappy way.

"Oh, but they did, Jimmy!"

"Why, grandpapa, what _did_ you do?"

"I climbed into a hollow tree."

"_Of course!_" said both children.

"Now I'm going to tell you a true wolf story, and that's what few grandpapas can do out of their own experience.

"I was resting on the shore of a lake, with my snow-shoes off to ease my sore toes, when I saw a pack of wolves trotting lazily toward me on the snow that covered the ice. I was sure they had not seen me. Right at my elbow was a big hollow pine. It had an opening down to the ground, a good deal like the door of a sentry-box.

"There was a smaller opening about thirty feet higher up. I had looked up and seen this before I saw the wolves. Then I rose, stood for a moment in the hollow, and climbed up by my feet, knees, hands, and elbows till I thought my feet were well above the top of the opening. Dead wood and dust fell as I ascended, but I hoped the wolves had not heard me."

"Did they, grandpapa?"

"Perhaps not at first, Jenny. But maybe they got a scent of the deer-meat I was carrying. At any rate, they were soon snapping and snarling over it and my snow-shoes. _Gobble-de-gobble, yip, yap, snap, growl, snarl, gobble_--the meat was all gone in a moment, like little Red Riding Hood."

"Why, grandpapa! The wolf didn't eat little Red Riding Hood. The boy came in time--don't you remember?"

"Perhaps you never read _my_ Red Riding Hood, Jenny," said the old gentleman, laughing. "At any rate, the wolves lunched at my expense; yet I hoped they wouldn't be polite enough to look round for their host. But they did inquire for me--not very politely, I must say. They seemed in bad humor--perhaps there hadn't been enough lunch to go round."

"The greedy things! A whole haunch of venison!" cried Jenny.

"Ah, but I had provided no currant jelly with it, and of course they were vexed. If you ever give a dinner-party to wolves, don't forget the currant jelly, Jenny. How they yelled for it--_Cur-r-r-rant-jell-yell-yell-elly-yell!_ That's the way they went.

"And they also said, _Yow--yow--there's--yow--no--desser-r-rt--either--yow--yow!_ Perhaps they wanted me to explain. At any rate, they put their heads into the opening--how many at once I don't know, for I could not see down; and then they screamed for me. It was an uncomfortably close scream, chickens. My feet must have been nearer them than I thought, for one fellow's nose touched my moccasin as he jumped."

"O grandpapa! If he had caught your foot!"

"But he didn't, Jenny, dear. He caught something worse. When he tumbled back he must have fallen on the other fellows, for there was a great snapping and snarling and yelping all at once.

"Meantime I tried to go up out of reach. It was easy enough; but with every fresh hold I took with shoulders, elbows, hands, and feet, the dead old wood crumbled and broke away, so that thick dust filled the hollow tree.

"I was afraid I should be suffocated. But up I worked till at last I got to the upper hole and stuck out my head for fresh air. There I was, pretty comfortable for a little while, and I easily supported my weight by bending my back, thrusting with my feet, and holding on the edge of the hole by my hands.

"After getting breath I gave my attention to the wolves. They did not catch sight of me for a few moments. Some stood looking much interested at the lower opening, as terriers do at the hole where a rat has disappeared.

"Dust still came from the hole to the open air. Some wolves sneezed; others sat and squealed with annoyance, as Bruno does when you close the door on him at dinner-time. They were disgusted at my concealment. Of course you have a pretty good idea of what they said, Jenny."

"No, grandpapa. The horrid, cruel things! What did they say?"

"Well, of course wolf talk is rude, even savage, and dreadfully profane. As near as I could make out, one fellow screamed, 'Shame, boy, taking an unfair advantage of poor starving wolves!' It seemed as if another fellow yelled, 'You young coward!' A third cried, 'Oh, yes, you think you're safe, do you?' A fourth, '_Yow--yow_--but we can wait till you come down!'"

Grandpapa mimicked the wolfish voices and looks so effectively that Jenny was rather alarmed.

"One old fellow seemed to suggest that they should go away and look for more venison for supper, while he kept watch on me. At that there was a general howl of derision. They seemed to me to be telling the old fellow that they were just as fond of boy as he, and that they understood his little game.

"The old chap evidently tried to explain, but they grinned with all their teeth as he turned from one to another. You must not suppose, chickens, that wolves have no sense of humor. Yet, poor things--"

"Poor things! Why, grandpapa!"

"Yes, Jenny; so lean and hungry, you know. Then one of them suddenly caught sight of my head, and didn't he yell! 'There he is--look up the tree!' cried Mr. Wolf.

"For a few moments they were silent. Then they sprang all at once, absurdly anxious to get nearer to me, twenty-five feet or so above their reach. On falling, they tumbled into several heaps of mouths and legs and tails. After scuffling and separating, they gazed up at me with silent longing. I should have been very popular for a few minutes had I gone down."

Jenny shuddered, and then nestled closer to her grandfather.

"Don't be afraid, Jenny. They didn't eat me--not that time. After a few moments' staring I became very impolite. 'Boo-ooh!' said I. 'Yah-ha-ha!' said I. 'You be shot!' I cried. They resented it. Even wolves love to be gently addressed.

"They began yelling, snarling, and howling at me worse than politicians at a sarcastic member of the opposite party. I imitated them. Nevertheless, I was beginning to be frightened. The weather was turning cold, night was coming on, and I didn't like the prospect of staying till morning.

"All of a sudden I began laughing. I had till then forgotten my pistol and pocketful of cartridges. There were seventeen nice wolves--"

"Nice! Why, grandpa!"

"They seemed _very_ nice wolves when I recollected the county bounty of six dollars for a wolf's head. Also, their skins would fetch two dollars apiece. 'Why,' said I, 'my dear wolves, you're worth one hundred and thirty-six dollars.'

"Don't you wish you may get it!' said they, sneering.

"You're worth one hundred and thirty-six dollars,' I repeated, 'and yet you want to sponge on a poor boy for a free supper! Shame!'"

"Did you say it out loud, grandpapa?"

"Well--no, Jenny. It's a thing I might have said, you know; but I didn't exactly think of it at the time. I was feeling for my pistol. Just as I tugged it out of its case at my waist, my knees, arms, and all lost their hold, and down I fell."

"Grandpapa, _dear!_" Jenny nervously clutched him.

"I didn't fall far, pet. But the dust! Talk of sweeping floors! The whole inside of the tree below me, borne down by my weight, had fallen in chunks and dust. There I was, gasping for breath, and the hole eight feet above my head. The lower entrance was of course blocked up by the rotten wood."

"And they couldn't get at you?"

"No, Jimmy; but I was in a dreadful situation. At first I did not fully realize it. Choking for air, my throat filled with particles of dry rot, I tried to climb up again. But the hollow had become too large. Nothing but a round shell of sound wood, a few inches thick, was left around me. With feet, hands, elbows, and back, I strove to ascend as before. But I could not. I was stuck fast!

"When I pushed with my feet I could only press my back against the other side of the enlarged hole. I was horrified. Indeed, I thought the tree would be my coffin. There I stood, breathing with difficulty even when I breathed through my capuchin, which I took off of my blanket overcoat. And there, I said to myself, I was doomed to stand till my knees should give way and my head fall forward, and some day, after many years, the old tree would blow down, and out would fall my white and r-rattling bo-o-nes."

"Don't--_please_, grandpapa!" Jenny was trying to keep from crying.

"In spite of my vision of my own skull and cross-bones," went on grandpapa, solemnly, "I was too young to despair wholly. I was at first more annoyed than desperate. To be trapped so, to die in a hole when I might have shot a couple of wolves and split the heads of one or two more with my hatchet before they could have had boy for supper--this thought made me very angry. And that brought me to thinking of my hatchet.

"It was, I remembered, beneath my feet at the bottom of the lower opening. If I could get hold of it, I might use it to chop a hole through my prison wall.

"But to burrow down was clearly impossible. Nevertheless, I knelt to feel the punky stuff under my feet. The absurdity of trying to work down a hole without having, like a squirrel, any place to throw out the material, was plain.

"But something more cheerful occurred to me. As I knelt, an object at my back touched my heels. It was the brass point of my hunting-knife sheath. Instantly I sprang to my feet, thrust my revolver back into its case, drew the stout knife, and drove the blade into the shell of pine.

"In two minutes I had scooped the blade through. In five minutes I had my face at a small hole that gave me fresh air. In half an hour I had hacked out a space big enough to put my shoulders through.

"The wolves, when they saw me again, were delighted. As for me, I was much pleased to see them, and said so. At the compliment they licked their jaws. They thought I was coming down, but I had something important to do first.

"I drew my pistol. It was a big old-fashioned Colt's revolver. With the first round of seven shots I killed three, and wounded another badly."

"Then the rest jumped on them and ate them all up, didn't they, grandpapa?"

"No, Jimmy, I'm glad to say they didn't. Wolves in Russian stories do, but American wolves are not cannibalistic; for this is a civilized country, you know.

"These wolves didn't even notice their fallen friends. They devoted their attention wholly to me, and I assure you, chickens, that I was

much gratified at that.

"I loaded again. It was a good deal of trouble in those days, when revolvers wore caps. I aimed very carefully, and killed four more. The other ten then ran away--at least some did; three could drag themselves but slowly.

"After loading again I dropped down, and started for camp. Next morning we came back and got ten skins, after looking up the three wounded."

"And you got only eighty dollars, instead of one hundred and thirty-six, grandpapa," said Jimmy, ruefully.

"Well, Jimmy, that was better than furnishing the pack with raw boy for supper."

"Is that all, grandpapa?"

"Yes, Jenny, dear."

"Do tell us another story."

"Not to-night, chickens. Not to-night. Grandpapa is old and sleepy. Good night, dears; and if you begin to dream of wolves, be sure you change the subject."

Grandpapa walked slowly up stairs.

"Can _you_ make different dreams come, Jimmy?" said Jenny.

"You goose! Grandpapa was pretending."

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THE MOONSHINERS AT HOHO-HEBEE FALLS

by Charles Egbert Craddock

I

If the mission of the little school-house in Holly Cove was to impress upon the youthful mind a comprehension and appreciation of the eternal verities of nature, its site could hardly have been better chosen. All along the eastern horizon deployed the endless files of the Great Smoky Mountains--blue and sunlit, with now and again the apparition of an unfamiliar peak, hovering like a straggler in the far-distant rear, and made visible for the nonce by some exceptional clarification of the atmosphere; or lowering, gray, stern; or with ranks of clouds hanging on their flanks, while all the artillery of heaven whirled about them, and the whole world quaked beneath the flash and roar of its volleys. The seasons successively painted the great landscape--spring, with its timorous touch, its illumined haze, its tender, tentative green and gray and yellow; summer, with its flush of completion, its deep, luscious, definite verdure, and the golden richness of fruition; autumn, with a full brush and all chromatic splendors; winter, in melancholy sepia tones, black and brown and many sad variations of the pallors of white. So high was the little structure on the side of a transverse ridge that it commanded a vast field of sky above the wooded ranges; and in the immediate foreground, down between the slopes which were cleft to the heart, was the river, resplendent with the reflected moods of the heavens. In this deep gorge the winds and the pines chanted like a Greek chorus; the waves continuously murmured an intricate rune, as if conning it by frequent repetition; a bird would call out from the upper air some joyous apothegm in a language which no creature of the earth has learned enough of happiness to translate.

But the precepts which prevailed in the little school-house were to the effect that rivers, except as they flowed as they listed to confusing points of the compass, rising among names difficult to remember, and emptying into the least anticipated body of water, were chiefly to be avoided for their proclivity to drown small boys intent on swimming or angling. Mountains, aside from the desirability of their recognition as forming one of the divisions of land somewhat easily distinguishable by the more erudite youth from plains, valleys, and capes, were full of crags and chasms, rattlesnakes and vegetable poisons, and a further familiarity with them was liable to result in the total loss of the adventurous--to see friends, family, and home no more.

These dicta, promulgated from the professorial chair, served to keep the small body of callow humanity, with whose instruction Abner Sage was intrusted by the State, well within call and out of harm's way during the short recesses, while under his guidance they toddled along the

rough road that leads up the steeps to knowledge. But one there was who either bore a charmed life or possessed an unequalled craft in successfully defying danger; who fished and swam with impunity; who was ragged and torn from much climbing of crags; whose freckled face bore frequent red tokens of an indiscriminate sampling of berries. It is too much to say that Abner Sage would have been glad to have his warnings made terrible by some bodily disaster to the juvenile dare-devil of the school, but Leander Yerby's disobedient incredulity as to the terrors that menaced him, and his triumphant immunity, fostered a certain grudge against him. Covert though it was, unrecognized even by Sage himself, it was very definitely apparent to Tyler Sudley when sometimes, often, indeed, on his way home from hunting, he would pause at the school-house window, pulling open the shutter from the outside, and gravely watch his protégé, who stood spelling at the head of the class.

For Leander Yerby's exploits were not altogether those of a physical prowess. He was a mighty wrestler with the multiplication table. He had met and overthrown the nine line in single-handed combat. He had attained unto some interesting knowledge of the earth on which he lived, and could fluently bound countries with neatness and precision, and was on terms of intimacy with sundry seas, volcanoes, islands, and other sizable objects. The glib certainty of his contemptuous familiarity with the alphabet and its untoward combinations, as he flung off words in four syllables in his impudent chirping treble, seemed something uncanny, almost appalling, to Tyler Sudley, who could not have done the like to save his stalwart life. He would stare dumfounded at the erudite personage at the head of the class; Leander's bare feet were always carefully adjusted to a crack between the puncheons of the floor, literally "toeing the mark"; his broad trousers, frayed out liberally at the hem, revealed his skinny and scarred little ankles, for his out-door adventures were not without a record upon the more impressionable portions of his anatomy; his waistband was drawn high up under his shoulder-blades and his ribs, and girt over the shoulders of his unbleached cotton shirt by braces, which all his learning did not prevent him from calling "galluses"; his cut, scratched, calloused hands were held stiffly down at the side seams in his nether garments in strict accordance with the regulations. But rules could not control the twinkle in his big blue eyes, the mingled effrontery and affection on his freckled face as he perceived the on-looking visitor, nor hinder the wink, the swiftly thrust-out tongue, as swiftly withdrawn, the egregious display of two rows of dishevelled jagged squirrel teeth, when once more, with an offhand toss of his tangled brown hair, he nimbly spelled a long twisted-tailed word, and leered capably at the grave intent face framed in the window.

"Why, Abner!" Tyler Sudley would break out, addressing the teacher, all unmindful of scholastic etiquette, a flush of pleasure rising to his swarthy cheek as he thrust back his wide black hat on his long dark

hair and turned his candid gray eyes, all aglow, upon the cadaverous, ascetic preceptor, "ain't Lee-yander a-gittin' on powerful, _powerful_ fas' with his book?"

"Not in enny ways so special," Sage would reply in cavalier discouragement, his disaffected gaze resting upon the champion scholar, who stood elated, confident, needing no commendation to assure him of his pre-eminence; "but he air disobejient, an' turr'ble, turr'ble bad."

The nonchalance with which Leander Yerby hearkened to this criticism intimated a persuasion that there were many obedient people in this world, but few who could so disport themselves in the intricacies of the English language; and Sudley, as he plodded homeward with his rifle on his shoulder, his dog running on in advance, and Leander pattering along behind, was often moved to add the weight of his admonition to the teacher's reproof.

"Lee-yander," he would gently drawl, "ye mustn't be so bad, honey; ye _mustn't_ be so turr'ble bad."

"Naw, ma'am, I won't," Leander would cheerily pipe out, and so the procession would wend its way along.

For he still confused the gender in titles of respect, and from force of habit he continued to do so in addressing Tyler Sudley for many a year after he had learned better.

These lapses were pathetic rather than ridiculous in the hunter's ears. It was he who had taught Leander every observance of verbal humility toward his wife, in the forlorn hope of propitiating her in the interest of the child, who, however, with his quick understanding that the words sought to do honor and express respect, had of his own accord transferred them to his one true friend in the household. The only friend he had in the world, Sudley often felt, with a sigh over the happy child's forlorn estate. And, with the morbid sensitiveness peculiar to a tender conscience, he winced under the knowledge that it was he who, through wrongheadedness or wrongheartedness, had contrived to make all the world besides the boy's enemy. Both wrongheaded and wronghearted he was, he sometimes told himself. For even now it still seemed to him that he had not judged amiss, that only the perversity of fate had thwarted him. Was it so fantastically improbable, so hopeless a solace that he had planned, that he should have thought his wife might take comfort for the death of their own child in making for its sake a home for another, orphaned, forlorn, a burden, and a glad riddance to those into whose grudging charge it had been thrown? This bounty of hope and affection and comfort had seemed to him a free gift from the dead baby's hands, who had no need of it since coming into its infinite heritage of immortality, to the living waif, to whom it was like life

itself, since it held all the essential values of existence. The idea smote him like an inspiration. He had ridden twenty miles in a snowy night to beg the unwelcome mite from the custody of its father's half-brothers, who were on the eve of moving to a neighboring county with all their kin and belongings.

Tyler Sudley was a slow man, and tenacious of impressions. He could remember every detail of the events as they had happened--the palpable surprise, the moment of hesitation, the feint of denial which successively ensued on his arrival. It mattered not what the season or the hour--he could behold at will the wintry dawn, the deserted cabin, the glow of embers dying on the hearth within; the white-covered wagon slowly a-creak along the frozen road beneath the gaunt, bare, overhanging trees, the pots and pans as they swung at the rear, the bucket for water swaying beneath, the mounted men beside it, the few head of swine and cattle driven before them. Years had passed, but he could feel anew the vague stir of the living bundle which he held on the pommel of his saddle, the sudden twist it gave to bring its inquiring, apprehensive eyes, so large in its thin, lank-jawed, piteous little countenance, to bear on his face, as if it understood its transfer of custody, and trembled lest a worse thing befall it. One of the women stopped the wagon and ran back to pin about its neck an additional wrapping, an old red-flannel petticoat, lest it should suffer in its long, cold ride. His heart glowed with vicarious gratitude for her forethought, and he shook her hand warmly and wished her well, and hoped that she might prosper in her new home, and stood still to watch the white wagon out of sight in the avenue of the snow-laden trees, above which the moon was visible, a-journeying too, swinging down the western sky.

Laurelia Sudley sat in stunned amazement when, half-frozen, but triumphant and flushed and full of his story, he burst into the warm home atmosphere, and put the animated bundle down upon the hearth-stone in front of the glowing fire. For one moment she met its forlorn gaze out of its peaked and pinched little face with a vague hesitation in her own worn, tremulous, sorrow-stricken eyes. Then she burst into a tumult of tears, upbraiding her husband that he could think that another child could take the place of her dead child--all the dearer because it was dead; that she could play the traitor to its memory and forget her sacred grief; that she could do aught as long as she should live but sit her down to bewail her loss, every tear a tribute, every pang its inalienable right, her whole smitten existence a testimony to her love. It was in vain that he expostulated. The idea of substitution had never entered his mind. But he was ignorant, and clumsy of speech, and unaccustomed to analyze his motives. He could not put into words his feeling that to do for the welfare of this orphaned and unwelcome little creature all that they would have done for their own was in some sort a memorial to him, and brought them nearer to him--that she might find in

it a satisfaction, an occupation--that it might serve to fill her empty life, her empty arms.

But no! She thought, and the neighbors thought, and after a time Tyler Sudley came to think also, that he had failed in the essential duty to the dead--that of affectionate remembrance; that he was recreant, strangely callous. They all said that he had seemed to esteem one baby as good as another, and that he was surprised that his wife was not consoled for the loss of her own child because he took it into his head to go and toll off the Yerby baby from his father's half-brothers "ez war movin' away an' war glad enough ter get rid o' one head o' human stock ter kerry, though, _bein' human_, they oughter been ashamed ter gin him away like a puppy-dog, or an extry cat, all hands consarned."

From the standpoint she had taken Laurelia had never wavered. It was an added and a continual reproach to her husband that all the labor and care of the ill-advised acquisition fell to her share. She it was who must feed and clothe and tend the gaunt little usurper; he needs must be accorded all the infantile prerogatives, and he exacted much time and attention. Despite the grudging spirit in which her care was given she failed in no essential, and presently the interloper was no longer gaunt or pallid or apprehensive, but grew pink and cherubic of build, and arrogant of mind. He had no sensitive sub-current of suspicion as to his welcome; he filled the house with his gay babbling, and if no maternal chirpings encouraged the development of his ideas and his powers of speech, his cheerful spirits seemed strong enough to thrive on their own stalwart endowments. His hair began to curl, and a neighbor, remarking on it to Laurelia, and forgetting for the moment his parentage, said, in admiring glee, twining the soft tendrils over her finger, that Mrs. Sudley had never before had a child so well-favored as this one. From this time forth was infused a certain rancor into his foster-mother's spirit toward him. Her sense of martyrdom was complete when another infant was born and died, leaving her bereaved once more to watch this stranger grow up in her house, strong and hearty, and handsomer than any child of hers had been.

The mountain gossips had their own estimate of her attitude.

"I ain't denyin' but what she hed nat'ral feelin' fur her own chil'ren, bein' dead," said the dame who had made the unfortunate remark about the curling hair, "but Laurelia Sudley war always a contrary-minded, lackadaisical kind o' gal afore she war married, sorter set in opposition, an' now ez she ain't purty like she useter was, through cryin' her eyes out, an' gittin' sallow-complected an' bony, I kin notice her contrariousness more. Ef Tyler hedn't brung that chile home, like ez not she'd hev sot her heart on borryin' one herself from somebody. Lee-yander ain't in nowise abused, ez I kin see--ain't acquainted with the rod, like the Bible say he oughter be, an' ennybody

kin see ez Laurelia don't like the name he gin her, yit she puts up with it. She larnt him ter call Ty 'Cap'n,' bein' she's sorter proud of it, 'kase Ty war a cap'n of a critter company in the war: 'twarn't sech a mighty matter nohow; he jes got ter be cap'n through the other off'cers bein' killed off. An' the leetle boy got it twisted somehows, an' calls _her_ 'Cap'n' an' Ty 'Neighbor,' from hearin' old man Jeemes, ez comes in constant, givin' him that old-fashioned name. 'Cap'n' 'bout fits Laurelia, though, an' that's a fac'."

Laurelia's melancholy ascendancy in the household was very complete. It was characterized by no turbulence, no rages, no long-drawn argument or objurgation; it expressed itself only in a settled spirit of disaffection, a pervasive suggestion of martyrdom, silence or sighs, or sometimes a depressing singing of hymn tunes. For her husband had long ago ceased to remonstrate, or to seek to justify himself. It was with a spirit of making amends that he hastened to concede every point of question, to defer to her preference in all matters, and Laurelia's sway grew more and more absolute as the years wore on. Leander Yerby could remember no other surroundings than the ascetic atmosphere of his home. It had done naught apparently to quell the innate cheerfulness of his spirit. He evidently took note, however, of the different standpoint of the "Captain" and his "Neighbor," for although he was instant in the little manifestations of respect toward her which he had been taught, his childish craft could not conceal their spuriousness.

"That thar boy treats me ez ef I war a plumb idjit," Laurelia said one day, moved to her infrequent anger. "Tells me, 'Yes, ma'am, cap'n,' an' 'Naw, ma'am, cap'n,' jes ter quiet me--like folks useter do ter old Ed'ard Green, ez war in his dotage--an' then goes along an' does the very thing I tell him not ter do."

Sudley looked up as he sat smoking his pipe by the fire, a shade of constraint in his manner, and a contraction of anxiety in his slow, dark eyes, never quite absent when she spoke to him aside of Leander.

She paused, setting her gaunt arms akimbo, and wearing the manner of one whose kindly patience is beyond limit abused. "Kems in hyar, he do, a-totin' a fiddle. An' I says, 'Lee-yander Yerby, don't ye know that thar thing's the devil's snare?' 'Naw, ma'am, cap'n,' he says, grinnin' like a imp; 'it's _my_ snare, fur I hev bought it from Peter Teazely fur two rabbits what I cotch in my trap, an' my big red rooster, an' a bag o' seed pop-corn, an' the only hat I hev got in the worl'.' An' with that the consarn gin sech a yawp, it plumb went through my haid. An' then the critter jes tuk ter a-bowin' it back an' forth, a-playin' 'The Chicken in the Bread-trough' like demented, a-dancin' off on fust one foot an' then on t'other till the puncheons shuck. An' I druv him out the house. I won't stan' none o' Satan's devices hyar! I tole him he couldn't fetch that fiddle hyar whenst he kems home ter-night, an' I be

a-goin' ter make him a sun-bonnet or a nightcap ter wear stiddier his hat that he traded off."

She paused.

Her husband had risen, the glow of his pipe fading in his unheeding hand, his excited eyes fixed upon her. "Laurely," he exclaimed, "ye ain't meanin' ez that thar leetle critter could play a chune fust off on a fiddle 'thout no larnin'!"

She nodded her head in reluctant admission.

He opened his mouth once or twice, emitting no sound. She saw how his elation, his spirit of commendation, his pride, set at naught her displeasure, albeit in self-defence, perchance, he dared not say a word. With an eye alight and an absorbed face, he laid his pipe on the mantel-piece, and silently took his way out of the house in search of the youthful musician.

Easily found! The racked and tortured echoes were all aquake within half a mile of the spot where, bareheaded, heedless of the threatened ignominy alike of sun-bonnet or nightcap, Leander sat in the flickering sunshine and shadow upon a rock beside the spring, and blissfully experimented with all the capacities of catgut to produce sound.

"Listen, Neighbor!" he cried out, descrying Tyler Sudley, who, indeed, could do naught else--"_listen_! Ye won't hear much better fiddlin' this side o' kingdom come!" And with glad assurance he capered up and down, the bow elongating the sound to a cadence of frenzied glee, as his arms sought to accommodate the nimbler motions of his legs.

Thus it was the mountaineers later said that Leander fell into bad company. For, the fiddle being forbidden in the sober Laurelia's house, he must needs go elsewhere to show his gift and his growing skill, and he found a welcome fast enough. Before he had advanced beyond his stripling youth, his untutored facility had gained a rude mastery over the instrument; he played with a sort of fascination and spontaneity that endeared his art to his uncritical audiences, and his endowment was held as something wonderful. And now it was that Laurelia, hearing him, far away in the open air, play once a plaintive, melodic strain, fugue-like with the elfin echoes, felt a strange soothing in the sound, found tears in her eyes, not all of pain but of sad pleasure, and assumed thenceforth something of the port of a connoisseur. She said she "couldn't abide a fiddle jes sawed helter-skelter by them ez hedn't larned, but ter play saaft an' slow an' solemn, and no dancin' chune, no frolic song--she warn't set agin that at all." And she desired of Leander a repetition of this sunset motive that evening when he had come home late, and she discovered him hiding the obnoxious instrument under

the porch. But in vain. He did not remember it. It was some vague impulse, as unconsciously voiced as the dreaming bird's song in the sudden half-awake intervals of the night. Over and again, as he stood by the porch, the violin in his arms, he touched the strings tentatively, as if, perchance, being so alive, they might of their own motion recall the strain that had so lately thrilled along them.

He had grown tall and slender. He wore boots to his knees now, and pridefully carried a "shootin'-iron" in one of the long legs--to his great discomfort. The freckles of his early days were merged into the warm uniform tint of his tanned complexion. His brown hair still curled; his shirt-collar fell away from his throat, round and full and white--the singer's throat--as he threw his head backward and cast his large roving eyes searchingly along the sky, as if the missing strain had wings.

The inspiration returned no more, and Laurelia experienced a sense of loss. "Some time, Lee-yander, ef ye war ter kem acrost that chune agin, try ter set it in yer remembrance, an' play it whenst ye kem home," she said, wistfully, at last, as if this errant melody were afloat somewhere in the vague realms of sound, where one native to those haunts might hope to encounter it anew.

"Yes, ma'am, cap'n, I will," he said, with his facile assent. But his tone expressed slight intention, and his indifference bespoke a too great wealth of "chunes"; he could feel no lack in some unremembered combination, sport of the moment, when another strain would come at will, as sweet perchance, and new.

She winced as from undeserved reproach when presently Leander's proclivities for the society of the gay young blades about the countryside, sometimes reputed "evil men," were attributed to this exile of the violin from the hearth-stone. She roused herself to disputation, to indignant repudiation.

"They talk ez ef it war _me_ ez led the drinkin', an' the gamin', an' the dancin', and sech, ez goes on in the Cove, 'kase whenst Lee-yander war about fryin' size I wouldn't abide ter hev him a-sawin' away on the fiddle in the house enough ter make me deaf fur life. At fust the racket of it even skeered Towse so he wouldn't come out from under the house fur two days an' better; he jes sot under thar an' growled, an' shivered, an' showed his teeth ef ennybody spoke ter him. Nobody don't like Lee-yander's performin' better'n I do whenst he plays them saaft, slippin'-away, slow medjures, ez sound plumb religious--ef 'twarn't a sin ter say so. Naw, sir, ef ennybody hev sot Lee-yander on ter evil ways 'twarn't me. My conscience be clear."

Nevertheless she was grievously ill at ease when one day there rode up

to the fence a tall, gaunt, ill-favored man, whose long, lean, sallow countenance, of a Pharisaic cast, was vaguely familiar to her, as one recognizes real lineaments in the contortions of a caricature or the bewilderments of a dream. She felt as if in some long-previous existence she had seen this man as he dismounted at the gate and came up the path with his saddle-bags over his arm. But it was not until he mustered an unready, unwilling smile, that had of good-will and geniality so slight an intimation that it was like a spasmodic grimace, did she perceive how time had deepened tendencies to traits, how the inmost thought and the secret sentiment had been chiselled into the face in the betrayals of the sculpture of fifteen years.

"Nehemiah Yerby!" she exclaimed. "I would hev knowed ye in the happy land o' Canaan."

"Let's pray we may all meet thar, Sister Sudley," he responded. "Let's pray that the good time may find none of us unprofitable servants."

Mrs. Sudley experienced a sudden recoil. Not that she did not echo his wish, but somehow his manner savored of an exclusive arrogation of piety and a suggestion of reproach.

"That's my prayer," she retorted, aggressively. "Day an' night, that's my prayer."

"Yes'm, fur us an' our households, Sister Sudley--we mus' think o' them c'mitted ter our charge."

She strove to fling off the sense of guilt that oppressed her, the mental attitude of arraignment. He was a young man when he journeyed away in that snowy dawn. She did not know what changes had come in his experience. Perchance his effervescent piety was only a habit of speech, and had no significance as far as she was concerned. The suspicion, however, tamed her in some sort. She attempted no retort. With a mechanical, reluctant smile, ill adjusted to her sorrow-lined face, she made an effort to assume that the greeting had been but the conventional phrasings of the day.

"Kem in, kem in, Nehemiah; Tyler will be glad ter see ye, an' I reckon ye will be powerful interested ter view how Lee-yander hev growed an' prospered."

She felt as if she were in some terrible dream as she beheld him slowly wag his head from side to side. He had followed her into the large main room of the cabin, and had laid his saddle-bags down by the side of the chair in which he had seated himself, his elbows on his knees, his hands held out to the flickering blaze in the deep chimney-place, his eyes significantly narrowing as he gazed upon it.

"Naw, Sister Sudley," he wagged his head more mournfully still. "I kin but grieve ter hear how my nevy Lee-yander hev 'prospered,' ez ye call it, an' I be s'prised ye should gin it such a name. Oh-h-h, Sister Sudley!" in prolonged and dreary vocative, "I 'lowed ye war a godly woman. I knowed yer name 'mongst the church-goers an' the church-members." A faint flush sprang into her delicate faded cheek; a halo encircled this repute of sanctity, she felt with quivering premonition that it was about to be urged as a testimony against her. "Elsewise I wouldn't hev gin my cornsent ter hev lef' the leetle lam', Lee-yander, in yer fold. Precious, precious leetle lam'!"

Poor Laurelia! Were it not that she had a sense of fault under the scathing arraignment of her motives, her work, and its result, although she scarcely saw how she was to blame, that she had equally with him esteemed Leander's standpoint iniquitous, she might have made a better fight in her own interest. Why she did not renounce the true culprit as one on whom all godly teachings were wasted, and, adopting the indisputable vantage-ground of heredity, carry the war into the enemy's country, ascribing Leander's shortcomings to his Yerby blood, and with stern and superior joy proclaiming that he was neither kith nor kin of hers, she wondered afterward, for this valid ground of defence did not occur to her then. In these long mourning years she had grown dull; her mental processes were either a sad introspection or reminiscence. Now she could only take into account her sacrifices of feeling, of time, of care; the illnesses she had nursed, the garments that she had made and mended--ah, how many! laid votive on the altar of Leander's vigor and his agility, for as he scrambled about the crags he seemed, she was wont to say, to climb straight out of them. The recollection of all this--the lesser and unspiritual maternal values, perchance, but essential--surged over her with bitterness; she lost her poise, and fell a-bickering.

"'Precious leetle lam'," she repeated, scornfully. "Precious he mus' hev been! Fur when ye lef' him he hedn't a whole gyarmint ter his back, an' none but them that kivered him."

Nehemiah Yerby changed color slightly as the taunt struck home, but he was skilled in the more æsthetic methods of argument.

"We war pore--mighty pore indeed, Sister Sudley."

Now, consciously in the wrong, Sister Sudley, with true feminine inconsistency, felt better. She retorted with bravado.

"Needle an' thread ain't 'spensive nowhar ez I knows on, an' the gov'mint hev sot no tax on saaft home-made soap, so far ez hearn from."

She briskly placed her chair, a rude rocker, the seat formed of a

taut-stretched piece of ox-hide, beside the fire, and took up her knitting. A sock for Leander it was--one of many of all sizes. She remembered the first that she had measured for the bare pink toes which he had brought there, forlorn candidates for the comfortable integuments in which they were presently encased, and how she had morbidly felt that every stitch she took was a renunciation of her own children, since a stranger was honored in their place. The tears came into her eyes. It was only this afternoon that she had experienced a pang of self-reproach to realize how near happiness she was--as near as her temperament could approach. But somehow the air was so soft; she could see from where she sat how the white velvet buds of the aspen-trees in the dooryard had lengthened into long, cream-tinted, furry tassels; the maples on the mountain-side lifted their red flowering boughs against the delicate blue sky; the grass was so green; the golden candlesticks bunched along the margin of the path to the rickety gate were all a-blossoming. The sweet appeal of spring had never been more insistent, more coercive. Somehow peace, and a placid content, seemed as essential incidents in the inner life as the growth of the grass anew, the bursting of the bud, or the soft awakening of the zephyr. Even within the house, the languors of the fire drowsing on the hearth, the broad bar of sunshine across the puncheon floor, so slowly creeping away, the sense of the vernal lengthening of the pensive afternoon, the ever-flitting shadow of the wren building under the eaves, and its iterative gladsome song breaking the fireside stillness, partook of the serene beatitude of the season and the hour. The visitor's drawling voice rose again, and she was not now constrained to reproach herself that she was too happy.

"Yes'm, pore though we war then--an' we couldn't look forward ter the Lord's prosperin' us some sence--we never would hev lef' the precious leetle lam"--his voice dwelt with unvanquished emphasis upon the obnoxious words--"'mongst enny but them persumed ter be godly folks. Tyler war a toler'ble good soldier in the war, an' hed a good name in the church, but _ye_ war persumed to be a plumb special Christian with no pledjure in this worl'."

Laurelia winced anew. This repute of special sanctity was the pride of her ascetic soul. Few of the graces of life or of the spirit had she coveted, but her pre-eminence as a religionist she had fostered and cherished, and now through her own deeds of charity it seemed about to be wrested from her.

"Lee-yander Yerby hev larnt nuthin' but good in this house, an' all my neighbors will tell you the same word. The Cove 'lows I hev been _too_ strict."

Nehemiah was glancing composedly about the room. "That thar 'pears ter be a fiddle on the wall, ain't it, Mis' Sudley?" he said, with an incidental air and the manner of changing the subject.

Alack, for the æsthetic perversion! Since the playing of those melancholy minor strains in that red sunset so long ago, which had touched so responsive a chord in Laurelia's grief-worn heart, the crazy old fiddle had been naturalized, as it were, and had exchanged its domicile under the porch for a position on the wall. It was boldly visible, and apparently no more ashamed of itself than was the big earthen jar half full of cream, which was placed close to the fireplace on the hearth in the hope that its contents might become sour enough by to-morrow to be churned.

Laurelia looked up with a start at the instrument, red and lustrous against the brown log wall, its bow poised jauntily above it, and some glistening yellow reflection from the sun on the floor playing among the strings, elusive, soundless fantasies.

Her lower jaw dropped. She was driven to her last defences, and sore beset. "It air a fiddle," she said, slowly, at last, and with an air of conscientious admission, as if she had had half a mind to deny it. "A fiddle the thing air." Then, as she collected her thoughts, "Brother Pete Vickers 'lows ez he sees no special sin in playin' the fiddle. He 'lows ez in some kentries--I disremember whar--they plays on 'em in church, quirin' an' hymn chunes an' sech."

Her voice faltered a little; she had never thought to quote this fantasy in her own defence, for she secretly believed that old man Vickers must have been humbugged by some worldly brother skilled in drawing the long bow himself.

Nehemiah Yerby seemed specially endowed with a conscience for the guidance of other people, so quick was he to descry and pounce upon their shortcomings. If one's sins are sure to find one out, there is little doubt but that Brother Nehemiah would be on the ground first.

"Air you-uns a-settin' under the preachin' o' Brother Peter Vickers?" he demanded in a sepulchral voice.

"Naw, naw," she was glad to reply. "'Twar onderstood ez Brother Vickers wanted a call ter the church in the Cove, bein' ez his relations live hyar-about, an' he kem up an' preached a time or two. But he didn't git no call. The brethren 'lowed Brother Vickers war too slack in his idees o' religion. Some said his hell warn't half hot enough. Thar air some powerful sinners in the Cove, an' nuthin' but good live coals an' a liquid blazin' fire air a-goin' ter deter them from the evil o' thar ways. So Brother Vickers went back the road he kem."

She knit off her needle while, with his head still bent forward, Nehemiah Yerby sourly eyed her, feeling himself a loser with Brother

Vickers, in that he did not have the reverend man's incumbency as a grievance.

"He 'pears ter me ter see mo' pleasure in religion 'n penance, ennyhow," he observed, bitterly. "An' the Lord knows the bes' of us air sinners."

"An' he laughs loud an' frequent--mightily like a sinner," she agreed.

"An' whenst he prays, he prays loud an' hearty, like he jes expected ter git what he axed fur sure's shootin'. Some o' the bretherin' sorter taxed him with his sperits, an' he 'lowed he couldn't holp but be cheerful whenst he hed the Lord's word fur it ez all things work tergether fur good. An' he laffed same ez ef they hedn't spoke ter him serious."

"Look at that, now!" exclaimed Nehemiah. "An' that thar man ez good ez dead with the heart-disease."

Laurelia's eyes were suddenly arrested by his keen, pinched, lined face. What there was in it to admonish her she could hardly have said, nor how it served to tutor her innocent craft.

"I ain't so sure 'bout Brother Vickers bein' so wrong," she said, slowly. "He 'lowed ter me ez I hed spent too much o' my life a-sorrowin', 'stiddier a-praisin' the Lord for his mercies." Her face twitched suddenly; she could not yet look upon her bereavements as mercies. "He 'lowed I would hev been a happier an' a better 'oman ef I hed took the evil ez good from the Lord's hand, fur in his sendin' it's the same. An' I know that air a true word. An' that's what makes me 'low what he said war true 'bout'n that fiddle; that I ought never ter hev perverted the boy from playin' 'round home an' sech, an' 'twarn't no sin but powerful comfortable an' pleasurable ter set roun' of a cold winter night an' hear him play them slow, sweet, dyin'-away chunes--" She dropped her hands, and gazed with the rapt eyes of remembrance through the window at the sunset clouds which, gathering red and purple and gold on the mountain's brow, were reflected roseate and amethyst and amber at the mountain's base on the steely surface of the river. "Brother Vickers 'lowed he never hearn sech in all his life. It brung the tears ter his eyes--it surely did."

"He'd a heap better be weepin' fur them black sheep o' his congregation an' fur Lee-yander's shortcomin's, fur ez fur ez I kin hear he air about ez black a sheep ez most pastors want ter wrestle with fur the turnin' away from thar sins. Yes'm, Sister Sudley, that's jes what p'inted out my jewty plain afore my eyes, an' I riz up an' kem ter be instant in a-doin' of it. 'I'll not leave my own nevy in the tents o' sin,' I sez. 'I hev chil'n o' my own, hearty feeders an' hard on shoe-leather, ter support, but I'll not grudge my brother's son a home.' Yes, Laurely Sudley, I hev kem ter kerry him back with me. Yer jewty ain't been done

by him, an' I'll leave him a dweller in the tents o' sin no longer."

His enthusiasm had carried him too far. Laurelia's face, which at first seemed turning to stone as she gradually apprehended his meaning and his mission, changed from motionless white to a tremulous scarlet while he spoke, and when he ceased she retorted herself as one of the ungodly.

"Ye mus' be mighty ambitious ter kerry away a skin full o' broken bones! Jes let Tyler Sudley hear ez ye called his house the tents o' the ungodly, an' that ye kem hyar a-faultin' me, an' tellin' me ez I 'ain't done my jewty ennywhar or ennyhow!" she exclaimed, with a pride which, as a pious saint, she had never expected to feel in her husband's reputation as a high-tempered man and a "mighty handy fighter," and with implicit reliance upon both endowments in her quarrel.

"Only in a speritchual sense, Sister Sudley," Nehemiah gasped, as he made haste to qualify his asseveration. "I only charge you with havin' sp'iled the boy; ye hev sp'iled him through kindness ter him, an' not _ye_ so much ez Ty. Ty never hed so much ez a dog that would mind him! His dog wouldn't answer call nor whistle 'thout he war so disposed. _I_ never faulted ye, Sister Sudley; 'twar jes Ty I faulted. I know Ty."

He knew, too, that it was safer to call Ty and his doings in question, big and formidable and belligerent though he was, than his meek-mannered, melancholy, forlorn, and diminutive wife. Nehemiah rose up and walked back and forth for a moment with an excited face and a bent back, and a sort of rabbit-like action. "Now, I put it to you, Sister Sudley, air Ty a-makin' that thar boy plough ter-day--jes _be-you-ti-ful_ field weather!"

Sister Sudley, victorious, having regained her normal position by one single natural impulse of self-assertion, not as a religionist, but as Tyler Sudley's wife, and hence entitled to all the show of respect which that fact unaided could command, sat looking at him with a changed face--a face that seemed twenty years younger; it had the expression it wore before it had grown pinched and ascetic and insistent sorrowful; one might guess how she had looked when Tyler Sudley first went up the mountain "a-courtin'." She sought to assume no other stand-point. Here she was intrenched. She shook her head in negation. The affair was none of hers. Ty Sudley could take ample care of it.

Nehemiah gave a little skip that might suggest a degree of triumph. "Aha, not ploughin'! But _Ty_ is ploughin'. I seen him in the field. An' Lee-yander ain't ploughin'! An' how did I know? Ez I war a-ridin' along through the woods this mornin' I kem acrost a striplin' lad a-walkin' through the undergrowth ez onconsarned ez a killdee an' ez nimble. An' under his chin war a fiddle, an' his head war craned down ter it." He mimicked the attitude as he stood on the hearth. "He never looked up

wunst. Away he walked, light ez a plover, an' _a-ping_, _pang_, _ping_, _pang_," in a high falsetto, "went that fiddle! I war plumb 'shamed fur the critters in the woods ter view sech idle sinfulness, a ole ow_el_, a-blinkin' down out'n a hollow tree, kem ter see what _ping_, _pang_, _ping_, _pang_ meant, an' thar war a rabbit settin' up on two legs in the bresh, an' a few stray razor-back hawks; I tell ye I war mortified 'fore even sech citizens ez them, an' a lazy, impident-lookin' dog ez followed him."

"How did ye know 'twar Lee-yander?" demanded Mrs. Sudley, recognizing the description perfectly, but after judicial methods requiring strict proof.

"Oh-h! by the fambly favor," protested the gaunt and hard-featured Nehemiah, capably. "I knowed the Yerby eye."

"He hev got his mother's eyes." Mrs. Sudley had certainly changed her stand-point with a vengeance. "He hev got his mother's _be-you-ti-ful_ _blue_ eyes and her curling, silken brown hair--sorter red; little Yerby in _that_, mebbe; but sech eyes, an' sech lashes, an' sech fine curling hair ez none o' yer fambly ever hed, or ever will."

"Mebbe so. I never seen him more'n a minit. But he might ez well hev a _be-you-ti-ful_ curlin' nose, like the elephint in the show, for all the use he air, or I be afeard air ever likely ter be."

* * * * *

Tyler Sudley's face turned gray, despite his belligerent efficiencies, when his wife, hearing the clank of the ox-yoke as it was flung down in the shed outside, divined the home-coming of the ploughman and his team, and slipped out to the barn with her news. She realized, with a strange enlightenment as to her own mental processes, what angry jealousy the look on his face would have roused in her only so short a time ago--jealousy for the sake of her own children, that any loss, any grief, should be poignant and pierce his heart save for them. Now she was sorry for him; she felt with him.

But as he continued silent, and only stared at her dumfounded and piteous, she grew frightened--she knew not of what.

"Shucks, Ty!" she exclaimed, catching him by the sleeve with the impulse to rouse him, to awaken him, as it were, to his own old familiar identity; "ye ain't 'feared o' that thar snaggle-toothed skeer-crow in yander; he would be plumb comical ef he didn't look so mean-natured an' sech a hypercrite."

He gazed at her, his eyes eloquent with pain.

"Laurely!" he gasped, "this hyar thing plumb knocks me down; it jes takes the breath o' life out'n me!"

She hesitated for a moment. Any anxiety, any trouble, seemed so incongruous with the sweet spring-tide peace in the air, that one did not readily take it home to heart. Hope was in the atmosphere like an essential element; one might call it oxygen or caloric or vitality, according to the tendency of mind and the habit of speech. But the heart knew it, and the pulses beat strongly responsive to it. Faith ruled the world. Some tiny bulbous thing at her feet that had impeded her step caught her attention. It was coming up from the black earth, and the buried darkness, and the chill winter's torpor, with all the impulses of confidence in the light without, and the warmth of the sun, and the fresh showers that were aggregating in the clouds somewhere for its nurture--a blind inanimate thing like that! But Tyler Sudley felt none of it; the blow had fallen upon him, stunning him. He stood silent, looking gropingly into the purple dusk, veined with silver glintings of the moon, as if he sought to view in the future some event which he dreaded, and yet shrank to see.

She had rarely played the consoler, so heavily had she and all her griefs leaned on his supporting arm. It was powerless now. She perceived this, all dismayed at the responsibility that had fallen upon her. She made an effort to rally his courage. She had more faith in it than in her own.

"'Feard o' _him_!" she exclaimed, with a sharp tonic note of satire. "Kem in an' view him."

"Laurely," he quavered, "I oughter hev got it down in writin' from him; I oughter made him sign papers agreein' fur me ter keep the boy till he growed ter be his own man."

She, too, grew pale. "Ye ain't meanin' ter let him take the boy sure enough!" she gasped.

"I moughtn't be able ter holp it; I dun'no' how the law stands. He air kin ter Lee-yander, an' mebbe hev got the bes' right ter him."

She shivered slightly; the dew was falling, and all the budding herbage was glossed with a silver glister. The shadows were sparse. The white branches of the aspens cast only the symmetrical outline of the tree form on the illumined grass, and seemed scarcely less bare than in winter, but on one swaying bough the mocking-bird sang all the joyous prophecies of the spring to the great silver moon that made his gladsome day so long.

She was quick to notice the sudden cessation of his song, the alert, downward poise of his beautiful head, his tense critical attitude. A mimicking whistle rose on the air, now soft, now keen, with swift changes and intricate successions of tones, ending in a brilliant borrowed roulade, delivered with a wonderful velocity and *_élan_*. The long tail feathers, all standing stiffly upward, once more drooped; the mocking-bird turned his head from side to side, then lifting his full throat he poured forth again his incomparable, superb, infinitely versatile melody, fixing his glittering eye on the moon, and heeding the futilely ambitious worldling no more.

The mimicking sound heralded the approach of Leander. Laurelia's heart, full of bitterness for his sake, throbbed tenderly for him. Ah, what was to be his fate! What unkind lot did the future hold for him in the clutches of a man like this! Suddenly she was pitying his mother--her own children, how safe!

She winced to tell him what had happened, but she it was who, bracing her nerves, made the disclosure, for Sudley remained silent, the end of the ox-yoke in his trembling hands, his head bare to the moon and the dew, his face grown lined and old.

Leander stood staring at her out of his moonlit blue eyes, his hat far back on the brown curls she had so vaunted, damp and crisp and clinging, the low limp collar of his unbleached shirt showing his round full throat, one hand resting on the high curb of the well, the other holding a great brown gourd full of the clear water which he had busied himself in securing while she sought to prepare him to hear the worst. His lips, like a bent bow as she thought, were red and still moist as he now and then took the gourd from them, and held it motionless in the interest of her narration, that indeed touched him so nearly. Then, as she made point after point clear to his comprehension, he would once more lift the gourd and drink deeply, for he had had an active day, inducing a keen thirst.

She had been preparing herself for the piteous spectacle of his frantic fright, his futile reliance on them who had always befriended him, his callow forlorn helplessness, his tears, his reproaches; she dreaded them.

He was silent for a reflective moment when she had paused. "But what's he want with me, Cap'n?" he suddenly demanded. "Mought know I warn't industrious in the field, ez he seen me off a-fiddlin' in the woods whilst Neighbor war a-ploughin'."

"Mebbe he 'lows he mought *_make_* ye industrious an' git cornsider'ble work out'n ye," she faltered, flinching for him.

After another refreshing gulp from the gourd he canvassed this dispassionately. "Say his own chil'n air 'hearty feeders an' hard on shoe-leather?' Takes a good deal o' goadin' ter git ploughin' enough fur the wuth o' feed out'n a toler'ble beastis like old Blaze-face thar, don't it, Neighbor?--an' how is it a-goin' ter be with a human ez mebbe will hold back an' air sot agin ploughin' ennyhow, an' air sorter idle by profession? 'Twould gin him a heap o' trouble--more'n the ploughin' an' sech would be wuth--a heap o' trouble." Once more he bowed his head to the gourd.

"He 'lowed ye shouldn't dwell no mo' in the tents o' sin. He seen the fiddle, Lee; it's all complicated with the fiddle," she quavered, very near tears of vexation.

He lifted a smiling moonlit face; his half-suppressed laugh echoed gurglingly in the gourd. "Cap'n," he said, reassuringly, "jes let's hear Uncle Nehemiah talk some mo', an' ef I can't see no mo' likely work fur me 'n ploughin', I'll think myself mighty safe."

They felt like three conspirators as after supper they drew their chairs around the fire with the unsuspecting Uncle Nehemiah. However, Nehemiah Yerby could hardly be esteemed unsuspecting in any point of view, so full of vigilant craft was his intention in every anticipation, so slyly sanctimonious was his long countenance.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast than Tyler Sudley's aspect presented. His candid face seemed a mirror for his thought; he had had scant experience in deception, and he proved a most unlikely novice in the art. His features were heavy and set; his manner was brooding and depressed; he did not alertly follow the conversation; on the contrary, he seemed oblivious of it as his full dark eyes rested absently on the fire. More than once he passed his hand across them with a troubled, harassed manner, and he sighed heavily. For which his co-conspirators could have fallen upon him. How could he be so dull, so forgetful of all save the fear of separation from the boy whom he had reared, whom he loved as his own son; how could he fail to know that a jaunty, assured mien might best serve his interests until at any rate the blow had fallen; why should he wear the insignia of defeat before the strength of his claim was tested? Assuredly his manner was calculated to greatly reinforce Nehemiah Yerby's confidence, and to assist in eliminating difficulties in the urging of his superior rights and the carrying out of his scheme. Mrs. Sudley's heart sank as she caught a significant gleam from the boy's eyes; he too appreciated this disastrous policy, this virtual surrender before a blow was struck.

"An' Ty ain't afeard o' bars," she silently commented, "nor wolves, nor wind, nor lightning, nor man in enny kind o' a free fight; but bekase he dun'no' how the _law_ stands, an' air afeard the law _mought_ be able

ter take Lee-yander, he jes sets thar ez pitiful ez a lost kid, fairly ready ter blate aloud."

She descried the covert triumph twinkling among the sparse light lashes and "crow-feet" about Nehemiah's eyes as he droned on an ever-lengthening account of his experiences since leaving the county.

"It's a mighty satisfyin' thing ter be well off in yearthly goods an' chattels," said Laurelia, with sudden inspiration. "Ty, thar, is in debt."

For Uncle Nehemiah had been dwelling unctuously upon the extent to which it had pleased the Lord to prosper him. His countenance fell suddenly. His discomfiture in her unexpected disclosure was twofold, in that it furnished a reason for Tyler's evident depression of spirits, demolishing the augury that his manner had afforded as to the success of the guest's mission, and furthermore, to Nehemiah's trafficking soul, it suggested that a money consideration might be exacted to mollify the rigors of parting.

For Nehemiah Yerby had risen to the dignities, solvencies, and responsibilities of opening a store at the cross-roads in Kildeer County. It was a new and darling enterprise with him, and his mind and speech could not long be wiled away from the subject. This abrupt interjection of a new element into his cogitations gave him pause, and he did not observe the sudden rousing of Tyler Sudley from his revery, and the glance of indignant reproach which he cast on his wife. No man, however meek, or however bowed down with sorrow, will bear unmoved a gratuitous mention of his debts; it seems to wound him with all the rancor of insult, and to enrage him with the hopelessness of adequate retort or reprisal. It is an indignity, like taunting a ghost with cock-crow, or exhorting a clergyman to repentance. He flung himself all at once into the conversation, to bar and baffle any renewed allusion to that subject, and it was accident rather than intention which made him grasp Nehemiah in the vise of a quandary also.

"Ye say ye got a store an' a stock o' truck, Nehemiah. Air ye ekal ter keepin' store an' sech?" he demanded, speculatively, with an inquiring and doubtful corrugation of his brows, from which a restive lock of hair was flung backward like the toss of a horse's mane.

"I reckon so," Nehemiah sparely responded, blinking at him across the fireplace.

"An' ye say ye hev applied fur the place o' postmaster?" Tyler prosed on. "All that takes a power o' knowledge--readin' an' writin' an' cipherin' an' sech. How air ye expectin' to hold out, 'kase I know ye never hed no mo' larnin' than me, an' I war acquainted with ye till ye

war thirty years old an' better?"

The tenor of this discourse did not comport with his customary suavity and tactful courtesy toward a guest, but he was much harassed and had lost his balance. He had a vague idea that Mrs. Sudley hung upon the flank of the conversation with a complete summary of amounts, dates, and names of creditors, and he sought to balk this in its inception. Moreover, his forbearance with Nehemiah, with his presence, his personality, his mission, had begun to wane. Bitter reflections might suffice to fill the time were he suffered to be silent; but since a part in the conversation had been made necessary, he had for it no honeyed words.

"I'd make about ez fit a postmaster, I know, ez that thar old ow_el_ a-hootin' out yander. I could look smart an' sober like him, but that's 'bout all the fur my school-larnin' kerried me, an' yourn didn't reach ter the nex' mile-post--an' that I know."

Nehemiah's thin lips seemed dry. More than once his tongue appeared along their verges as he nervously moistened them. His small eyes had brightened with an excited look, but he spoke very slowly, and to Laurelia it seemed guardedly.

"I tuk ter my book arterward, Brother Sudley. I applied myself ter larnin' vigorous. Bein' ez I seen the Lord's hand war liberal with the gifts o' this worl', I wanted ter stir myself ter deserve the good things."

Sudley brought down the fore-legs of his chair to the floor with a thump. Despite his anxiety a slow light of ridicule began to kindle on his face; his curling lip showed his strong white teeth.

"Waal, by gum! ye mus' hev been a sight ter be seen! Ye, forty or fifty years old, a-settin' on the same seat with the chil'n at the deestric' school, an' a-competin' with the leetle tadpoles fur 'Baker an' Shady' an sech!"

He was about to break forth with a guffaw of great relish when Nehemiah spoke hastily, forestalling the laughter.

"Naw; Abner Sage war thar fur a good while las' winter a-visitin' his sister, an' he kem an' gin me lessons an' set me copies thar at my house, an' I larnt a heap."

Leander lifted his head suddenly. The amount of progress possible to this desultory and limited application he understood only too well. He had not learned so much himself to be unaware how much in time and labor learning costs. The others perceived no incongruity. Sudley's face was

florid with pride and pleasure, and his wife's reflected the glow.

"Ab Sage at the cross-roads! Then he mus' hev tole ye 'bout Lee-yander hyar, an' his larnin'. Ab tole, I know."

Nehemiah drew his breath in quickly. His twinkling eyes sent out the keenest glance of suspicion, but the gay, affectionate, vaunting laugh, as Tyler Sudley turned around and clapped the boy a ringing blow on his slender shoulder, expressed only the plenitude of his simple vainglory.

"Lee-yander hyar _knows it all_!" he boasted. "Old Ab himself don't know no mo'! I'll be bound old Ab went a-braggin'--hey, Lee-yander?"

But the boy shrank away a trifle, and his smile was mechanical as he silently eyed his relative.

"Ab 'lowed he war tur'ble disobejient," said Nehemiah, after a pause, and cautiously allowing himself to follow in the talk, "an' gi'n over ter playin' the fiddle." He hesitated for a moment, longing to stigmatize its ungodliness; but the recollection of Tyler Sudley's uncertain temper decided him, and he left it unmolested. "But Ab 'lowed ye war middlin' quick at figgers, Lee-yander--middlin' quick at figgers!"

Leander, still silent and listening, flushed slightly. This measured praise was an offence to him; but he looked up brightly and obediently when his uncle wagged an uncouthly sportive head (Nehemiah's anatomy lent itself to the gay and graceful with much reluctance), thrust his hands into his pockets, and, tilting himself back in his chair, continued:

"I'll try ye, sonny--I'll try ye. How much air nine times seven?--nine times seven?"

"Forty-two!" replied the boy, with a bright, docile countenance fixed upon his relative.

There was a pause. "Right!" exclaimed Nehemiah, to the relief of Sudley and his wife, who had trembled during the pause, for it seemed so threatening. They smiled at each other, unconscious that the examination meant aught more serious than a display of their prodigy's learning.

"An', now, how much air twelve times eight?" demanded Nehemiah.

"Sixty-six!" came the answer, quick as lightning.

"Right, sir, every time!" cried Nehemiah with a glow of genuine exultation, as he brought down the fore-legs of the chair to the floor,

and the two Sudleys laughed aloud with pleasure.

Leander saw them all distorted and grimacing while the room swam round. The scheme was clear enough to him now. The illiterate Nehemiah, whose worldly prosperity had outstripped his mental qualifications, had bethought himself of filling the breach with his nephew, given away as surplusage in his burdensome infancy, but transformed into a unique utility under the tutelage of Abner Sage. It was his boasting of his froward pupil, doubtless, that had suggested the idea, and Leander understood now that he was to do the work of the store and the post-office under the nominal incumbency of this unlettered lout. Had the whole transaction been open and acknowledged, Leander would have had scant appetite for the work under this master; but he revolted at the flimsy, contemptible sham; he bitterly resented the innuendoes against the piety of the Sudleys, not that he cared for piety, save in the abstract; he was daunted by the brutal ignorance, the doltish inefficiency of the imposture that had so readily accepted his patently false answers to the simple questions. He had a sort of crude reverence for education, and it had seemed to him a very serious matter to take such liberties with the multiplication table. He valued, too, with a boy's stalwart vanity, his reputation for great learning, and he would not have lightly jeopardized it did he not esteem the crisis momentous. He knew not what he feared. The fraud of the intention, the groundless claim to knowledge, made Nehemiah's scheme seem multifariously guilty in some sort; while Tyler Sudley and his wife, albeit no wiser mathematically, had all the sanctions of probity in their calm, unpretending ignorance.

"Ef Cap'n or Neighbor wanted ter run a post-office on my larnin', or ter keep store, they'd be welcome; but I won't play stalkin'-horse fur that thar man's still-hunt, sure ez shootin'," he said to himself.

The attention which he bent upon the conversation thenceforth was an observation of its effect rather than its matter. He saw that he was alone in his discovery. Neither Sudley nor his wife had perceived any connection between the store, the prospective post-office, and the desire of the illiterate would-be postmaster to have his erudite nephew restored to his care.

It may be that the methods of his "Neighbor" and the "Captain" in the rearing of Leander, the one with unbridled leniency, the other with spurious severity and affected indifference, had combined to foster self-reliance and decision of character, or it may be that these qualities were inherent traits. At all events, he encountered the emergency without an instant's hesitation. He felt no need of counsel. He had no doubts. He carried to his pallet in the roof-room no vacillations and no problems. His resolve was taken. For a time, as he listened to the movements below-stairs, the sound of voices still rose,

drowsy as the hour waxed late; the light that flickered through the cracks in the puncheon flooring gradually dulled, and presently a harsh grating noise acquainted him with the fact that Sudley was shovelling the ashes over the embers; then the tent-like attic was illumined only by the moonlight admitted through the little square window at the gable end--so silent, so still, it seemed that it too slept like the silent house. The winds slumbered amidst the mute woods; a bank of cloud that he could see from his lowly couch lay in the south becalmed. The bird's song had ceased. It seemed to him as he lifted himself on his elbow that he had never known the world so hushed. The rustle of the quilt of gay glazed calico was of note in the quietude; the impact of his bare foot on the floor was hardly a sound, rather an annotation of his weight and his movement; yet in default of all else the sense of hearing marked it. His scheme seemed impracticable as for an instant he wavered at the head of the ladder that served as a stairway; the next moment his foot was upon the rungs, his light, lithe figure slipping down it like a shadow. The room below, all eclipsed in a brown and dusky-red medium, the compromise between light and darkness that the presence of the embers fostered, was vaguely revealed to him. He was hardly sure whether he saw the furniture all in place, or whether he knew its arrangement so well that he seemed to see. Suddenly, as he laid his hand on the violin on the wall, it became visible, its dark red wood richly glowing against the brown logs and the tawny clay daubing. A tiny white flame had shot up in the midst of the gray ashes, as he stood with the cherished object in his cautious hand, his excited eyes, dilated and expectant, searching the room apprehensively, while a vague thrill of a murmur issued from the instrument, as if the spirit of music within it had been awakened by his touch--too vague, too faintly elusive for the dormant and somewhat dull perceptions of Nehemiah Yerby, calmly slumbering in state in the best room.

The faint jet of flame was withdrawn in the ashes as suddenly as it had shot forth, and in the ensuing darkness, deeper for the contrast with that momentary illumination, it was not even a shadow that deftly mounted the ladder again and emerged into the sheeny twilight of the moonlit roof-room. Leander was somehow withheld for a moment motionless at the window; it may have been by compunction; it may have been by regret, if it be possible to the very young to definitely feel either. There was an intimation of pensive farewell in his large illumined eyes as they rested on the circle of familiar things about him--the budding trees, the well, with its great angular sweep against the sky, the still sward, the rail-fences glistening with the dew, the river with the moonlight in a silver blazonry on its lustrous dark surface, the encompassing shadows of the gloomy mountains. There was no sound, not even among the rippling shallows; he could hear naught but the pain of parting throbbing in his heart, and from the violin a faint continuous susurrus, as if it murmured half-asleep memories of the melodies that had thrilled its waking moments. It necessitated careful handling as he

deftly let himself out of the window, the bow held in his mouth, the instrument in one arm, while the other hand clutched the boughs of a great holly-tree close beside the house. It was only the moonlight on those smooth, lustrous leaves, but it seemed as if smiling white faces looked suddenly down from among the shadows: at this lonely hour, with none awake to see, what strange things may there not be astir in the world, what unmeasured, unknown forces, sometimes felt through the dulling sleep of mortals, and then called dreams! As he stood breathless upon the ground the wind awoke. He heard it race around the corner of the house, bending the lilac bushes, and then it softly buffeted him full in the face and twirled his hat on the ground. As he stooped to pick it up he heard whispers and laughter in the lustrous boughs of the holly, and the gleaming faces shifted with the shadows. He looked fearfully over his shoulder; the rising wind might waken some one of the household. His "Neighbor" was, he knew, solicitous about the weather, and suspicious of its intentions lest it not hold fine till all the oats be sown. A pang wrung his heart; he remembered the long line of seasons when, planting corn in the pleasant spring days, his "Neighbor" had opened the furrow with the plough, and the "Captain" had followed, dropping the grains, and he had brought up the rear with his hoe, covering them over, while the clouds floated high in the air, and the mild sun shone, and the wind kept the shadows a-flicker, and the blackbird and the crow, complacently and craftily watching them from afar, seemed the only possible threatening of evil in all the world. He hastened to stiffen his resolve. He had need of it. Tyler Sudley had said that he did not know how the law stood, and for himself, he was not willing to risk his liberty on it. He gazed apprehensively upon the little batten shutter of the window of the room where Nehemiah Yerby slept, expecting to see it slowly swing open and disclose him there. It did not stir, and gathering resolution from the terrors that had beset him when he fancied his opportunity threatened, he ran like a frightened deer fleetly down the road, and plunged into the dense forest. The wind kept him company, rollicking, quickening, coming and going in fitful gusts. He heard it die away, but now and again it was rustling among a double file of beech-trees all up the mountain-side. He saw the commotion in their midst, the effect of swift movement as the scant foliage fluttered, then the white branches of the trees all a-swaying like glistening arms flung upward, as if some bevy of dryads sped up the hill in elusive rout through the fastnesses.

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The next day ushered in a tumult and excitement unparalleled in the history of the little log-cabin. When Leander's absence was discovered, and inquiry of the few neighbors and search of the vicinity proved fruitless, the fact of his flight and its motive were persistently forced upon Nehemiah Yerby's reluctant perceptions, with the destruction of his cherished scheme as a necessary sequence. With some wild craving

for vengeance he sought to implicate Sudley as accessory to the mysterious disappearance. He found some small measure of solace in stumping up and down the floor before the hearth, furiously railing at the absent host, for Sudley had not yet relinquished the bootless quest, and indignantly upbraiding the forlorn, white-faced, grief-stricken Laurelia, who sat silent and stony, her faded eyes on the fire, heedless of his words. She held in her lap sundry closely-rolled knitted balls--the boy's socks that she had so carefully made and darned. A pile of his clothing lay at her feet. He had carried nothing but his fiddle and the clothes he stood in, and if she had had more tears she could have wept for his improvidence, for the prospective tatters and rents that must needs befall him in that unknown patchless life to which he had betaken himself.

Nehemiah Yerby argued that it was Sudley who had prompted the whole thing; he had put the boy up to it, for Leander was not so lacking in feeling as to flee from his own blood-relation. But he would set the law to spy them out. He would be back again, and soon.

He may have thought better of this presently, for he was in great haste to be gone when Tyler Sudley returned, and to his amazement in a counterpart frame of mind, charging Nehemiah with the responsibility of the disaster. It was strange to Laurelia that she, who habitually strove to fix her mind on religious things, should so relish the aspect of Ty Sudley in his secular rage on this occasion.

"Ye let we-uns hev him whilst so leetle an' helpless, but now that he air so fine growed an' robustious ye want ter git some work out'n him, an' he hev runned away an' tuk ter the woods tarrified by the very sight of ye," he averred. "He'll never kem back; no, he'll never kem back; fur he'll 'low ez ye would kem an' take him home with you; an' now the Lord only knows whar he is, an' what will become of him."

His anger and his tumultuous grief, his wild, irrepressible anxiety for Leander's safety, convinced the crafty Nehemiah that he was no party to the boy's scheme. Sudley's sorrow was not of the kind that renders the temper pliable, and when Nehemiah sought to point a moral in the absence of the violin, and for the first time in Sudley's presence protested that he desired to save Leander from that device of the devil, the master of the house shook his inhospitable fist very close indeed to his guest's nose, and Yerby was glad enough to follow that feature unimpaired out to his horse at the bars, saying little more.

He aired his views, however, at each house where he made it convenient to stop on his way home, and took what comfort there might be in the rôle of martyr. Leander was unpopular in several localities, and was esteemed a poor specimen of the skill of the Sudleys in rearing children. He had been pampered and spoiled, according to general report,

and more than one of his successive interlocutors were polite enough to opine that the change to Nehemiah's charge would have been a beneficent opportunity for much-needed discipline. Nehemiah was not devoid of some skill in interrogatory. He contrived to elicit speculations without giving an intimation of unduly valuing the answer.

"He's 'mongst the moonshiners, I reckon," was the universal surmise.
"He'll be hid mighty safe 'mongst them."

For where the still might be, or who was engaged in the illicit business, was even a greater mystery than Leander's refuge. Nothing more definite could be elicited than a vague rumor that some such work was in progress somewhere along the many windings of Hide-and-Seek Creek.

Nehemiah Yerby had never been attached to temperance principles, and, commercially speaking, he had thought it possible that whiskey on which no tax had been paid might be more profitably dispensed at his store than that sold under the sanctions of the government. These considerations, however, were as naught in view of the paralysis which his interests and schemes had suffered in Leander's flight. He dwelt with dismay upon the possibility that he might secure the postmastership without the capable assistant whose services were essential. In this perverse sequence of events disaster to his application was more to be desired than success. He foresaw himself browbeaten, humiliated, detected, a butt for the ridicule of the community, his pretensions in the dust, his pitiful imposture unmasked. And beyond these æsthetic misfortunes, the substantial emoluments of "keepin' store," with a gallant sufficiency of arithmetic to regulate prices and profits, were vanishing like the elusive matutinal haze before the noontide sun. Nehemiah Yerby groaned aloud, for the financial stress upon his spirit was very like physical pain. And in this inauspicious moment he bethought himself of the penalties of violating the Internal Revenue Laws of the United States.

Now it has been held by those initiated into such mysteries that there is scant affinity between whiskey and water. Nevertheless, in this connection, Nehemiah Yerby developed an absorbing interest in the watercourses of the coves and adjacent mountains, especially their more remote and sequestered tributaries. He shortly made occasion to meet the county surveyor and ply him with questions touching the topography of the vicinity, cloaking the real motive under the pretence of an interest in water-power sufficient and permanent enough for the sawing of lumber, and professing to contemplate the erection of a saw-mill at the most eligible point. The surveyor had his especial vanity, and it was expressed in his frequent boast that he carried a complete map of the county graven upon his brain; he was wont to esteem it a gracious opportunity when a casual question in a group of loungers enabled him to display his familiarity with every portion of his rugged and mountainous

region, which was indeed astonishing, even taking into consideration his incumbency for a number of terms, aided by a strong head for locality. Nehemiah Yerby's scheme was incalculably favored by this circumstance, but he found it unexpectedly difficult to support the figment which he had propounded as to his intentions. Fiction is one of the fine arts, and a mere amateur like Nehemiah is apt to fail in point of consistency. He was inattentive while the surveyor dilated on the probable value, the accessibility, and the relative height of the "fall" of the various sites, and their available water-power, and he put irrelevant queries concerning ineligible streams in other localities. No man comfortably mounted upon his hobby relishes an interruption. The surveyor would stop with a sort of bovine surprise, and break out in irritable parenthesis.

"That branch on the t'other side o' Panther Ridge? Why, man alive, that thread o' water wouldn't turn a spider web."

Nehemiah, quaking under the glance of his keen questioning eye, would once more lapse into silence, while the surveyor, loving to do what he could do well, was lured on in his favorite subject by the renewed appearance of receptivity in his listener.

"Waal, ez I war a-sayin', I know every furlong o' the creeks once down in the Cove, an' all their meanderings, an' the best part o' them in the hills amongst the laurel and the wildernesses. But now the ways of sech a stream ez Hide-an'-Seek Creek are past finding out. It's a 'sinking creek,' you know; goes along with a good volume and a swift current for a while to the west, then disappears into the earth, an' ain't seen fur five mile, then comes out agin running due north, makes a tremenjious jump--the Hoho-hebee Falls--then pops into the ground agin, an' ain't seen no more forever," he concluded, dramatically.

"How d'ye know it's the same creek?" demanded Nehemiah, sceptically, and with a wrinkling brow.

"By settin' somethin' afloat on it before it sinks into the ground--a piece of marked bark or a shingle or the like--an' finding it agin after the stream comes out of the caves," promptly replied the man of the compass, with a triumphant snap of the eye, as if he entertained a certain pride in the vagaries of his untamed mountain friend. "Nobody knows how often it disappears, nor where it rises, nor where it goes at last. It's got dozens of fust-rate millin' sites, but then it's too fur off fur you ter think about."

"Oh no 'tain't!" exclaimed Nehemiah, suddenly.

The surveyor stared. "Why, you ain't thinkin' 'bout movin' up inter the wilderness ter live, an' ye jes applied fur the post-office down at the cross-roads? Ye can't run the post-office thar an' a saw-mill thirty

mile away at the same time."

Nehemiah was visibly disconcerted. His wrinkled face showed the flush of discomfiture, but his craft rallied to the emergency.

"Moughtn't git the post-office, arter all's come an' gone. Nothin' is sartin in this vale o' tears."

"An' ye air goin' ter take ter the woods ef ye don't?" demanded the surveyor, incredulously. "Thought ye war goin' ter keep store?"

"Waal, I dun'no'; jes talkin' round," said Nehemiah, posed beyond recuperation. "I mus' be a-joggin', ennyhow. Time's a-wastin'."

As he made off hastily in the direction of his house, for this conversation had taken place at the blacksmith's shop at the cross-roads, the surveyor gazed after him much mystified.

"What is that old fox slyin' round after? He ain't studyin' 'bout no saw-mill, inquiren' round about all the out-o'-the-way water-power in the kentry fifty mile from where he b'longs. He's a heap likelier to be goin' ter start a wild cat still in them wild places--git his whiskey cheap ter sell in his store."

He shook his head sagely once for all, for the surveyor's mind was of the type prompt in reaching conclusions, and he was difficult to divert from his convictions.

A feature of the development of craft to a certain degree is the persuasion that this endowment is not shared. A fine world it would be if the Nehemiah Yerbys were as clever as they think themselves, and their neighbors as dull. He readily convinced himself that he had given no intimation that his objects and motives were other than he professed, and with unimpaired energy he went to work upon the lines which he had marked out for himself. A fine chase Hide-and-Seek Creek led him, to be sure, and it tried his enthusiasms to the uttermost. What affinity this brawling vagrant had for the briers and the rocks and the tangled fastnesses! Seldom, indeed, could he press in to its banks and look down upon its dimpled, laughing, heedless face without the sacrifice of fragments of flesh and garments left impaled upon the sharp spikes of the budding shrubs. Often it so intrenched itself amidst the dense woods, and the rocks and chasms of its craggy banks, that approach was impossible, and he followed it for miles only by the sound of its wild, sweet, woodland voice. And this, too, was of a wayward fancy; now, in turbulent glee among the rocks, riotously chanting aloud, challenging the echoes, and waking far and near the forest quiet; and again it was merely a low, restful murmur, intimating deep, serene pools and a dallying of the currents, lapsed in the fulness of content. Then

Nehemiah Yerby would be beset with fears that he would lose this whisper, and his progress was slight; he would pause to listen, hearing nothing; would turn to right, to left; would take his way back through the labyrinth of the laurel to catch a thread of sound, a mere crystalline tremor, and once more follow this transient lure. As the stream came down a gorge at a swifter pace and in a succession of leaps--a glassy cataract visible here and there, airily sporting with rainbows, affiliating with ferns and moss and marshy growths, the bounding spray glittering in the sunshine--it flung forth continuously tinkling harmonies in clear crystal tones, so penetrating, so definitely melodic, that more than once, as he paced along on his jaded horse, he heard in their midst, without disassociating the sounds, the _ping, pang, ping, pang_, of the violin he so condemned. He drew up at last, and strained his ear to listen. It did not become more distinct, always intermingled with the recurrent rhythm of the falling water, but always vibrating in subdued throbbings, now more acute, now less, as the undiscriminated melody ascended or descended the scale. It came from the earth, of this he was sure, and thus he was reminded anew of the caves which Hide-and-Seek Creek threaded in its long course. There was some opening near by, doubtless, that led to subterranean passages, dry enough here, since it was the stream's whim to flow in the open sunshine instead of underground. He would have given much to search for it had he dared. His leathery, lean, loose cheek had a glow of excitement upon it; his small eyes glistened; for the first time in his life, possibly, he looked young. But he did not doubt that this was the stronghold of the illicit distillers, of whom one heard so much in the Cove and saw so little. A lapse of caution, an inconsiderate movement, and he might be captured and dealt with as a spy and informer.

Nevertheless his discovery was of scant value unless he utilized it further. He had always believed that his nephew had fled to the secret haunts of the moonshiners. Now he only knew it the more surely; and what did this avail him, and how aid in the capture of the recusant clerk and assistant postmaster? He hesitated a moment; then fixing the spot in his mind by the falling of a broad crystal sheet of water from a ledge some forty feet high, by a rotting log at its base that seemed to rise continually, although the moving cataract appeared motionless, by certain trees and their relative position, and the blue peaks on a distant skyey background of a faint cameo yellow, he slowly turned his horse's rein and took his way out of danger. It was chiefly some demonstration on the animal's part that he had feared. A snort, a hoof-beat, a whinny would betray him, and very liable was the animal to any of these expressions. One realizes how unnecessary is speech for the exposition of opinion when brought into contradictory relations with the horse which one rides or drives. All day had this animal snorted his doubts of his master's sanity; all day had he protested against these aimless, fruitless rambles; all day had he held back with a high head and a hard mouth, while whip and spur pressed him through laurel almost

impenetrable, and through crevices of crags almost impassable. For were there not all the fair roads of the county to pace and gallop upon if one must needs be out and jogging! Unseen objects, vaguely discerned to be moving in the undergrowth affrighted the old plough-horse of the levels--infinitely reassured and whinnying with joyful relief when the head of horned cattle showed presently as the cause of the commotion. He would have given much a hundred times that day, and he almost said so a hundred times, too, to be at home, with the old bull-tongue plough behind him, running the straight rational furrow in the good bare open field, so mellow for corn, lying in the sunshine, inviting planting.

"Ef I git ye home wunst more, I'll be bound I'll leave ye thar," Nehemiah said, ungratefully, as they wended their way along; for without the horse he could not have traversed the long distances of his search, however unwillingly the aid was given.

He annotated his displeasure by a kick in the ribs; and when the old equine farmer perceived that they were absolutely bound binward, and that their aberrations were over for the present, he struck a sharp gait that would have done honor to his youthful days, for he had worn out several pairs of legs in Nehemiah's fields, and was often spoken of as being upon the last of those useful extremities. He stolidly shook his head, which he thought so much better than his master's, and bedtime found them twenty miles away and at home.

Nehemiah felt scant fatigue. He was elated with his project. He scented success in the air. It smelled like the season. It too was suffused with the urgent pungency of the rising sap, with the fragrance of the wild-cherry, with the vinous promise of the orchard, with the richness of the mould, with the vagrant perfume of the early flowers.

He lighted a tallow dip, and he sat him down with writing materials at the bare table to indite a letter while all his household slept. The windows stood open to the dark night, and Spring hovered about outside, and lounged with her elbows on the sill, and looked in. He constantly saw something pale and elusive against the blackness, for there was no moon, but he thought it only the timid irradiation with which his tallow dip suffused the blossoming wands of an azalea, growing lithe and tall hard by. With this witness only he wrote the letter--an anonymous letter, and therefore he was indifferent to the inadequacies of his penmanship and his spelling. He labored heavily in its composition, now and then perpetrating portentous blots. He grew warm, although the fire that had served to cook supper had long languished under the bank of ashes. The tallow dip seemed full of caloric, and melted rapidly in pendulous drippings. He now and again mopped his red face, usually so bloodless, with his big bandanna handkerchief, while all the zephyrs were fanning the flying tresses of Spring at the window, and the soft, sweet, delicately attuned vernal chorus of the marshes were tentatively

running over *_sotto voce_* their allotted melodies for the season. Oh, it was a fine night outside, and why should a moth, soft-winged and cream-tinted and silken-textured, come whisking in from the dark, as silently as a spirit, to supervise Nehemiah Yerby's letter, and travel up and down the page all befouled with the ink? And as he sought to save the sense of those significant sentences from its trailing silken draperies, why should it rise suddenly, circling again and again about the candle, pass through the flame, and fall in quivering agonies once more upon the page? He looked at it, dead now, with satisfaction. It had come so very near ruining his letter--an important letter, describing the lair of the illicit distillers to a deputy marshal of the revenue force, who was known to be in a neighboring town. He had good reason to withhold his signature, for the name of the informer in the ruthless vengeance of the region would be as much as his life was worth. The moth had not spoiled the letter--the laborious letter; he was so glad of that! He saw no analogies, he received not even a subtle warning, as he sealed and addressed the envelope and affixed the postage-stamp. Then he snuffed out the candle with great satisfaction.

The next morning the missive was posted, and all Nehemiah Yerby's plans took a new lease of life. The information he had given would result in an immediate raid upon the place. Leander would be captured among the moonshiners, but his youth and his uncle's representations--for he would give the officers an inkling of the true state of the case--would doubtless insure the boy's release, and his restoration to those attractive commercial prospects which had been devised for him.

II

The ordering of events is an intricate process, and to its successful exploitation a certain degree of sagacious prescience is a prerequisite, as well as a thorough mastery of the lessons of experience. For a day or so all went well in the inner consciousness of Nehemiah Yerby. The letter had satisfied his restless craving for some action toward the consummation of his ambition, and he had not the foresight to realize how soon the necessity of following it up would supervene. He first grew uneasy lest his letter had not reached its destination; then, when the illimitable field of speculation was thus opened out, he developed an ingenuity of imagination in projecting possible disaster. Day after day passed, and he heard naught of his cherished scheme. The revenueurs--craven wretches he deemed them, and he ground his teeth with rage because of their seeming cowardice in their duty, since their duty could serve his interests--might not have felt exactly disposed to risk their lives in these sweet spring days, when perhaps even a man whose life belongs to the government might be presumed to take some pleasure in it, by attempting to raid the den of a gang of moonshiners on the scanty faith of an informer's word, tenuous guaranty at best, and now

couched in an anonymous letter, itself synonym for a lie. Oh, what fine eulogies rose in his mind upon the manly virtue of courage! How enthusing it is at all times to contemplate the courage of others!--and how safe!

Then a revulsion of belief ensued, and he began to fear that they might already have descended upon their quarry, and with all their captives have returned to the county town by the road by which they came--nearer than the route through the cross-roads, though far more rugged. Why had not this possibility before occurred to him! He had so often prefigured their triumphant advent into the hamlet with all their guarded and shackled prisoners, the callow Leander in the midst, and his own gracefully enacted rôle of virtuous, grief-stricken, pleading relative, that it seemed a recollection--something that had really happened--rather than the figment of anticipation. But no word, no breath of intimation, had ruffled the serenity of the cross-roads. The calm, still, yellow sunshine day by day suffused the land like the benignities of a dream--almost too good to be true. Every man with the heart of a farmer within him was at the plough-handles, and making the most of the fair weather. The cloudless sky and the auspicious forecast of fine days still to come did more to prove to the farmer the existence of an all-wise, overruling Providence than all the polemics of the world might accomplish. The furrows multiplied everywhere save in Nehemiah's own fields, where he often stood so long in the turn-row that the old horse would desist from twisting his head backward in surprise, and start at last of his own motion, dragging the plough, the share still unanchored in the ground, half across the field before he could be stopped. The vagaries of these "lands" that the absent-minded Nehemiah laid off attracted some attention.

"What ails yer furrows ter run so crooked, Nehemiah?" observed a passer-by, a neighbor who had been to the blacksmith-shop to get his plough-point sharpened; he looked over the fence critically. "Yer eyesight mus' be failin' some."

"I dun'no'," rejoined Nehemiah, hastily. Then reverting to his own absorption. "War it you-uns ez I hearn say thar war word kem ter the cross-roads 'bout some revenueers raidin' 'round somewhar in the woods?"

The look of surprise cast upon him seemed to his alert anxiety to betoken suspicion. "Laws-a-massy, naw!" exclaimed his interlocutor. "Ye air the fust one that hev named sech ez that in these diggin's, fur I'd hev hearn tell on it, sure, ef thar hed been enny sech word goin' the rounds."

Nehemiah recoiled into silence, and presently his neighbor went whistling on his way. He stood motionless for a time, until the man was well out of sight, then he began to hastily unhitch the plough-gear. His

resolution was taken. He could wait no longer. For aught he knew the raiders might have come and gone, and be now a hundred miles away with their prisoners to stand their trial in the Federal court. His schemes might have all gone amiss, leaving him in naught the gainer. He could rest in uncertainty no more. He feared to venture further questions when no rumor stirred the air. They rendered him doubly liable to suspicion--to the law-abiding as a possible moonshiner, to any sympathizer with the distillers as a probable informer. He determined to visit the spot, and there judge how the enterprise had fared.

When next he heard that fine sylvan symphony of the sound of the falling water--the tinkling bell-like tremors of its lighter tones mingling with the sonorous, continuous, deeper theme rising from its weight and volume and movement; with the surging of the wind in the pines; with the occasional cry of a wild bird deep in the new verdure of the forests striking through the whole with a brilliant, incidental, detached effect--no faint vibration was in its midst of the violin's string, listen as he might. More than once he sought to assure himself that he heard it, but his fancy failed to respond to his bidding, although again and again he took up his position where it had before struck his ear. The wild minstrelsy of the woods felt no lack, and stream and wind and harping pine and vagrant bird lifted their voices in their wonted strains. He could hardly accept the fact; he would verify anew the landmarks he had made and again return to the spot, his hat in his hand, his head bent low, his face lined with anxiety and suspense. No sound, no word, no intimation of human presence. The moonshiners were doubtless all gone long ago, betrayed into captivity, and Leander with them. He had so hardened his heart toward his recalcitrant young kinsman and his Sudley friends, he felt so entirely that in being among the moonshiners Leander had met only his deserts in coming to the bar of Federal justice, that he would have experienced scant sorrow if the nephew had not carried off with his own personality his uncle's book-keeper and postmaster's clerk. And so--alas, for Leander! As he meditated on the untoward manner in which he had overshot his target, this marksman of fate forgot the caution which had distinguished his approach, for hitherto it had been as heedful as if he fully believed the lion still in his den. He slowly patrolled the bank below the broad, thin, crystal sheet, seeing naught but its rainbow hovering elusively in the sun, and its green and white skein-like draperies pendulous before the great dark arch over which the cataract fell. The log caught among the rocks in the spray at the base was still there, seeming always to rise while the restless water seemed motionless.

No trace that human beings had ever invaded these solitudes could he discover. No vague, faint suggestion of the well-hidden lair of the moonshiners did the wild covert show forth. "The revenueurs war smarter'n me; I'll say that fur 'em," he muttered at last as he came to a stand-still, his chin in his hand, his perplexed eyes on the ground. And

suddenly--a footprint on a marshy spot; only the heel of a boot, for the craggy ledges hid all the ground but this, a mere sediment of sand in a tiny hollow in the rock from which the water had evaporated. It was a key to the mystery. Instantly the rugged edges of the cliff took on the similitude of a path. Once furnished with this idea, he could perceive adequate footing all adown the precipitous way. He was not young; his habits had been inactive, and were older even than his age. He could not account for it afterward, but he followed for a few paces this suggestion of a path down the precipitous sides of the stream. He had a sort of triumph in finding it so practicable, and he essayed it still farther, although the sound of the water had grown tumultuous at closer approach, and seemed to foster a sort of responsive turmoil of the senses; he felt his head whirl as he looked at the bounding, frothing spray, then at the long swirls of the current at the base of the fall as they swept on their way down the gorge. As he sought to lift his fascinated eyes, the smooth glitter of the crystal sheet of falling water so close before him dazzled his sight. He wondered afterward how his confused senses and trembling limbs sustained him along the narrow, rugged path, here and there covered with oozing green moss, and slippery with the continual moisture. It evidently was wending to a ledge. All at once the contour of the place was plain to him; the ledge led behind the cataract that fell from the beetling heights above. And within were doubtless further recesses, where perchance the moonshiners had worked their still. As he reached the ledge he could see behind the falling water and into the great concave space which it screened beneath the beetling cliff. It was as he had expected--an arched portal of jagged brown rocks, all dripping with moisture and oozing moss, behind the semi-translucent green-and-white drapery of the cascade.

But he had not expected to see, standing quietly in the great vaulted entrance, a man with his left hand on a pistol in his belt, the mate of which his more formidable right hand held up with a steady finger on the trigger.

This much Nehemiah beheld, and naught else, for the glittering profile of the falls, visible now only aslant, the dark, cool recess beyond, that menacing motionless figure at the vanishing-point of the perspective, all blended together in an indistinguishable whirl as his senses reeled. He barely retained consciousness enough to throw up both his hands in token of complete submission. And then for a moment he knew no more. He was still leaning motionless against the wall of rock when he became aware that the man was sternly beckoning to him to continue his approach. His dumb lips moved mechanically in response, but any sound must needs have been futile indeed in the pervasive roar of the waters. He felt that he had hardly strength for another step along the precipitous way, but there is much tonic influence in a beckoning revolver, and few men are so weak as to be unable to obey its behests. Poor Nehemiah tottered along as behooved him, leaving all the world,

liberty, volition, behind him as the descending sheet of water fell between him and the rest of life and shut him off.

"That's it, my leetle man! I thought you could make it!" were the first words he could distinguish as he joined the mountaineer beneath the crag.

Nehemiah Yerby had never before seen this man. That in itself was alarming, since in the scanty population of the region few of its denizens are unknown to each other, at least by sight. The tone of satire, the gleam of enjoyment in his keen blue eye, were not reassuring to the object of his ridicule. He was tall and somewhat portly, and he had a bluff and offhand manner, which, however, served not so much to intimate his good-will toward you as his abounding good-humor with himself. He was a man of most arbitrary temper, one could readily judge, not only from his own aspect and manner, but from the docile, reliant, approving cast of countenance of his reserve force--a half-dozen men, who were somewhat in the background, lounging on the rocks about a huge copper still. They wore an attentive aspect, but offered to take no active part in the scene enacted before them. One of them--even at this crucial moment Yerby noticed it with a pang of regretful despair--held noiseless on his knee a violin, and more than once addressed himself seriously to rubbing rosin over the bow. There was scant music in his face--a square physiognomy, with thick features, and a shock of hay-colored hair striped somewhat with an effect of darker shades like a weathering stack. He handled the bow with a blunt, clumsy hand that augured little of delicate skill, and he seemed from his diligence to think that rosin is what makes a fiddle play. He was evidently one of those unhappy creatures furnished with some vague inner attraction to the charms of music, with no gift, no sentiment, no discrimination. Something faintly sonorous there was in his soul, and it vibrated to the twanging of the strings. He was far less alert to the conversation than the others, whose listening attitudes attested their appreciation of the importance of the moment.

"Waal," observed the moonshiner, impatiently, eying the tremulous and tongue-tied Yerby, "hev ye fund what ye war a-huntin' fur?"

So tenacious of impressions was Nehemiah that it was the violin in those alien hands which still focussed his attention as he stared gaspingly about. Leander was not here; probably had never been here; and the twanging of those strings had lured him to his fate. Well might he condemn the festive malevolence of the violin's influence! His letter had failed; no raider had intimidated these bluff, unafraid, burly law-breakers, and he had put his life in jeopardy in his persistent prosecution of his scheme. He gasped again at the thought.

"_Waal_," said the moonshiner, evidently a man of short patience, and

with a definite air of spurring on the visitor's account of himself, "we 'ain't been lookin' fur any spy lately, but I'm 'lowin' ez we hev fund him."

His fear thus put into words so served to realize to Yerby his immediate danger that it stood him in the stead of courage, of brains, of invention; his flaccid muscles were suddenly again under control; he wreathed his features with his smug artificial smile, that was like a grimace in its best estate, and now hardly seemed more than a contortion. But beauty in any sense was not what the observer was prepared to expect in Nehemiah, and the moonshiner seemed to accept the smile at its face value, and to respect its intention.

"Spies don't kem climbin' down that thar path o' yourn in full view through the water"--for the landscape was as visible through the thin falling sheet as if it had been the slightly corrugated glass of a window--"do they?" Yerby asked, with a jocose intonation. "That thar shootin'-iron o' yourn liked ter hev skeered me ter death whenst I fust seen it."

His interlocutor pondered on this answer for a moment. He had an adviser among his corps whose opinion he evidently valued; he exchanged a quick glance with one of the men who was but dimly visible in the shadows beyond the still, where there seemed to be a series of troughs leading a rill of running water down from some farther spring and through the tub in which the spiral worm was coiled. This man had a keen, white, lean face, with an ascetic, abstemious expression, and he looked less like a distiller than some sort of divine--some rustic pietist, with strange theories and unhappy speculations and unsettled mind. It was a face of subtle influences, and the very sight of it roused in Nehemiah a more heedful fear than the "shootin'-iron" in the bluff moonshiner's hand had induced. He was silent, while the other resumed the office of spokesman.

"Ye ain't 'quainted hyar"--he waved his hand with the pistol in it around at the circle of uncowering men, although the mere movement made Nehemiah cringe with the thought that an accidental discharge might as effectually settle his case as premeditated and deliberate murder. "Ye dun'no' none o' us. What air ye a-doin' hyar?"

"Why, that thar war the very trouble," Yerby hastily explained. "_I didn't know none o' ye!_ I hed hearn ez thar war a still somewhars on Hide-an'-Seek Creek"--once more there ensued a swift exchange of glances among the party--"but nobody knew who run it nor whar 'twar. An' one day, consider'ble time ago, I war a-passin' nigh 'bouts an' I hearn that fiddle, an' that revealed the spot ter me. An' I kem ter-day 'lowin' ye an' me could strike a trade."

Once more the bluff man of force turned an anxious look of inquiry to

the pale, thoughtful face in the brown and dark green shadows beyond the copper gleam of the still. If policy had required that Nehemiah should be despatched, his was the hand to do the deed, and his the stomach to support his conscience afterward. But his brain revolted from the discriminating analysis of Nehemiah's discourse and a decision on its merits.

"Trade fur what?" he demanded at last, on his own responsibility, for no aid had radiated from the face which his looks had interrogated.

"Fur whiskey, o' course." Nehemiah made the final plunge boldly. "I be goin' ter open a store at the cross-roads, an' I 'lowed I could git cheaper whiskey untaxed than taxed. I 'lowed ye wouldn't make it ef ye didn't expec' ter sell it. I didn't know none o' you-uns, an' none o' yer customers. An' ez I expec' ter git mo' profit on sellin' whiskey 'n ennything else in the store, I jes took foot in hand an' kem ter see 'boutn it mysef. I never 'lowed, though, ez it mought look cur'ous ter you-uns, or like a spy, ter kem ez bold ez brass down the path in full sight."

The logic of the seeming security of his approach, and the apparent value of his scheme, had their full weight. He saw credulity gradually overpowering doubt and distrust, and his heart grew light with relief. Even their cautious demur, intimating a reserve of opinion to the effect that they would think about it, did not daunt him now. He believed, in the simplicity of his faith in his own craft, now once more in the ascendant, that if they should accept his proposition he would be free to go without further complication of his relations with wild-cat whiskey. He could not sufficiently applaud his wits for the happy termination of the adventure to which they had led him. He had gone no further in the matter than he had always intended. Brush whiskey was the commodity that addressed itself most to his sense of speculation. For this he had always expected to ferret out some way of safely negotiating. He had gone no further than he should have done, at all events, a little later. He even began mentally to "figger on the price" down to which he should be able to bring the distillers, as he accepted a proffered seat in the circle about the still. He could neither divide nor multiply by fractions, and it is not too much to say that he might have been throttled on the spot if the moonshiners could have had a mental vision of the liberties the stalwart integers were taking with their price-current, so to speak, and the preternatural discount that was making so free with their profits. So absorbed in this pleasing intellectual exercise was Nehemiah that he did not observe that any one had left the coterie; but when a stir without on the rocks intimated an approach he was suddenly ill at ease, and this discomfort increased when the new-comer proved to be a man who knew him.

"Waal, Nehemiah Yerby!" he exclaimed, shaking his friend's hand, "I

never knowed you-uns ter be consarned in sech ez moonshinin'. I hev been a-neighborin' Isham hyar," he laid his heavy hand on the tall moonshiner's shoulder, "fur ten year an' better, but I won't hev nuthin' ter do with bresh whiskey or aidin' or abettin' in illicit 'stillin'. I like Isham, an' Isham he likes me, an' we hev jes agreed ter disagree."

Nehemiah dared not protest nor seek to explain. He could invent no story that would not give the lie direct to his representations to the moonshiners. He felt that their eyes were upon him. He could only hope that his silence did not seem to them like denial--and yet was not tantamount to confession in the esteem of his upbraider.

"Yes, sir," his interlocutor continued, "it's a mighty bad government ter run agin." Then he turned to the moonshiner, evidently taking up the business that had brought him here. "Lemme see what sorter brand ye hev registered fur yer cattle, Isham."

Yerby's heart sank when the suspicion percolated through his brain that this man had been induced to come here for the purpose of recognizing him. More fixed in this opinion was he when no description of the brand of the cattle could be found, and the visitor finally went away, his errand bootless.

From time to time during the afternoon other men went out and returned with recruits on various pretexts, all of which Nehemiah believed masked the marshalling of witnesses to incriminate him as one of themselves, in order to better secure his constancy to the common interests, and in case he was playing false to put others into possession of the facts as to the identity of the informer. His liability to the law for aiding and abetting in moonshining was very complete before the day darkened, and his jeopardy as to the information he had given made him shake in his shoes.

For at any moment, he reflected, in despair, the laggard raiders might swoop down upon them, and the choice of rôles offered to him was to seem to them a moonshiner, or to the moonshiners an informer. The first was far the safer, for the clutches of the law were indeed feeble as contrasted with the popular fury that would pursue him unwearied for years until its vengeance was accomplished. From the one, escape was to the last degree improbable; from the other, impossible.

Any pretext to seek to quit the place before the definite arrangements of his negotiation were consummated seemed even to him, despite his eagerness to be off, too tenuous, too transparent, to be essayed, although he devised several as he sat meditative and silent amongst the group about the still. The prospect grew less and less inviting as the lingering day waned, and the evening shadows, dank and chill, perceptibly approached. The brown and green recesses of the grotto were

at once murkier, and yet more distinctly visible, for the glow of the fire, flickering through the crevices of the metal door of the furnace, had begun to assert its luminous quality, which was hardly perceptible in the full light of day, and brought out the depth of the shadows. The figures and faces of the moonshiners showed against the deepening gloom. The sunset clouds were still red without; a vague roseate suffusion was visible through the falling water. The sun itself had not yet sunk, for an oblique and almost level ray, piercing the cataract, painted a series of faint prismatic tints on one side of the rugged arch. But while the outer world was still in touch with the clear-eyed day, night was presently here, with mystery and doubt and dark presage. The voice of Hoho-hebee Falls seemed to him louder, full of strange, uncomprehended meanings, and insistent iteration. Vague echoes were elicited. Sometimes in a seeming pause he could catch their lisping sibilant tones repeating, repeating--what? As the darkness encroached yet more heavily upon the cataract, the sense of its unseen motion so close at hand oppressed his very soul; it gave an idea of the swift gathering of shifting invisible multitudes, coming and going--who could say whence or whither? So did this impression master his nerves that he was glad indeed when the furnace door was opened for fuel, and he could see only the inanimate, ever-descending sheet of water--the reverse interior aspect of Hoho-hebee Falls--all suffused with the uncanny tawny light, but showing white and green tints like its diurnal outer aspect, instead of the colorless outlines, resembling a drawing of a cataract, which the cave knew by day. He did not pause to wonder whether the sudden transient illumination was visible without, or how it might mystify the untutored denizens of the woods, bear, or deer, or wolf, perceiving it aglow in the midst of the waters like a great topaz, and anon lost in the gloom. He pined to see it; the momentary cessation of darkness, of the effect of the sounds, so strange in the obscurity, and of the chill, pervasive mystery of the invisible, was so grateful that its influence was tonic to his nerves, and he came to watch for its occasion and to welcome it. He did not grudge it even when it gave the opportunity for a close, unfriendly, calculating scrutiny of his face by the latest comer to the still. This was the neighboring miller, also liable to the revenue laws, the distillers being valued patrons of the mill, and since he ground the corn for the mash he thereby aided and abetted in the illicit manufacture of the whiskey. His life was more out in the world than that of his underground _confrères_, and perhaps, as he had a thriving legitimate business, and did not live by brush whiskey, he had more to lose by detection than they, and deprecated even more any unnecessary risk. He evidently took great umbrage at the introduction of Nehemiah amongst them.

"Oh yes," he observed, in response to the cordial greeting which he met; "an' I'm glad ter see ye all too. I'm powerful glad ter kem ter the still enny time. It's ekal ter goin' ter the settlemint, or plumb ter town on a County Court day. Ye see _everybody_, an' hear _all_ the news,

an' meet up with _interestin' strangers_. I tell ye, now, the mill's plumb lonesome compared ter the still, an' the mill's always hed the name of a place whar a heap o' cronies gathered ter swap lies, an' sech."

The irony of this description of the social delights and hospitable accessibilities of a place esteemed the very stronghold of secrecy itself--the liberty of every man in it jeopardized by the slightest lapse of vigilance or judgment--was very readily to be appreciated by the group, who were invited by this fair show of words to look down the vista of the future to possible years of captivity in the jails of far-away States as Federal prisoners. The men gazed heavily and anxiously from one to another as the visitor sank down on the rocks in a relaxed attitude, his elbow on a higher ledge behind him, supporting his head on his hand; his other hand was on his hip, his arm stiffly akimbo, while he looked with an expression of lowering exasperation at Yerby. It was impossible to distinguish the color of his garb, so dusted with flour was he from head to foot; but his long boots drawn over his trousers to the knee, and his great spurs, and a brace of pistols in his belt, seemed incongruous accessories to the habiliments of a miller. His large, dark hat was thrust far back on his head; his hair, rising straight in a sort of elastic wave from his brow, was powdered white; the effect of his florid color and his dark eyes was accented by the contrast; his pointed beard revealed its natural tints because of his habit of frequently brushing his hand over it, and was distinctly red. He was lithe and lean and nervous, and had the impatient temper characteristic of mercurial natures. It mattered not to him what was the coercion of the circumstances which had led to the reception of the stranger here, nor what was the will of the majority; he disapproved of the step; he feared it; he esteemed it a grievance done him in his absence; and he could not conceal his feelings nor wait a more fitting time to express them in private. His irritation and objection evidently caused some solicitude amongst the others. He was important to them, and they deprecated his displeasure. Isham Beaton listened to the half-covert sneers of his words with perturbation plainly depicted on his face, and the man whom Nehemiah had at first noticed as one whose character seemed that of adviser, and whose opinion was valued, now spoke for the first time. He handed over a broken-nosed pitcher with the remark, "Try the flavor of this hyar whiskey, Alfred; 'pears like ter me the bes' we-uns hev ever hed."

His voice was singularly smooth; it had all the qualities of culture; every syllable, every lapse of his rude dialect, was as distinct as if he had been taught to speak in this way; his tones were low and even, and modulated to suave cadences; the ear experienced a sense of relief after the loud, strident voice of the miller, poignantly penetrating and pitched high.

"Naw, Hilary, I don't want nuthin' ter drink. 'Bleeged ter ye, but I ain't wantin' nuthin' ter drink," reiterated the miller, plaintively.

Isham Beaton cast a glance of alarm at the dimly seen, monastic face of his adviser in the gloom. It was unchanged. Its pallor and its keen outline enabled its expression to be discerned as he himself went through the motions of sampling the rejected liquor, shook his head discerningly, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and deposited the pitcher near by on a shelf of the rock.

A pause ensued. Nehemiah, with every desire to be agreeable, hardly knew how to commend himself to the irate miller, who would have none of his very existence. No one could more eagerly desire him to be away than he himself. But his absence would not satisfy the miller; nothing less than that the intruder should never have been here. Every perceptible lapse of the moonshiners into anxiety, every recurrent intimation of their most pertinent reason for this anxiety, set Nehemiah a-shaking in his shoes. Should it be esteemed the greatest good to the greatest number to make safely away with him, his fate would forever remain unknown, so cautious had he been to leave no trace by which he might be followed. He gazed with deprecating urbanity, and with his lips distended into a propitiating smile, at the troubled face powdered so white and with its lowering eyes so dark and petulant. He noted that the small-talk amongst the others, mere unindividualized lumpish fellows with scant voice in the government of their common enterprise, had ceased, and that they no longer busied themselves with the necessary work about the still, nor with the snickering interludes and horse-play with which they were wont to beguile their labors. They had all seated themselves, and were looking from one to the other of the more important members of the guild with an air which betokened the momentary expectation of a crisis. The only exception was the man who had the violin; with the persistent, untimely industry of incapacity, he twanged the strings, and tuned and retuned the instrument, each time producing a result more astonishingly off the key than before. He was evidently unaware of this till some one with senses ajar would suggest that all was not as it should be in the drunken reeling catch he sought to play, when he would desist in surprise, and once more diligently rub the bow with rosin, as if that mended the matter. The miller's lowering eyes rested on his shadowy outline as he sat thus engaged, for a moment, and then he broke out suddenly:

"Yes, this hyar still is the place fur news, an' the place ter look out fur what ye don't expec' ter happen. It's powerful pleasant ter be a-meetin' of folks hyar--this hyar stranger this evenin'"--his gleaming teeth in the semi-obscurity notified Yerby that a smile of spurious politeness was bent upon him, and he made haste to grin very widely in response--"an' that thar fiddle 'minds me o' how onexpected 'twar whenst I met up with Lee-yander hyar--'pears ter me, Bob, ez ye air goin' ter

diddle the life out'n his fiddle--an' Hilary jes begged an' beseeched me ter take the boy with me ter help 'round the mill, ez he war a-runnin' away. Ye want me ter 'commodate this stranger too, ez mebbe air runnin' from them ez wants him, hey Hilary?"

The grin was petrified on Nehemiah's face. He felt his blood rush quickly to his head in the excitement of the moment. So here was the bird very close at hand! And here was his enterprise complete and successful. He could go away after the cowardly caution of the moonshiners should have expended itself in dallying and delay, with his negotiation for the "wild-cat" ended, and his accomplished young relative in charge. He drew himself erect with a sense of power. The moonshiners, the miller, would not dare to make an objection. He knew too much! he knew far too much!

The door of the furnace was suddenly flung ajar, but he was too much absorbed to perceive the change that came upon the keen face of Hilary Tarbetts, who knelt beside it, as the guest's portentous triumphant smile was fully revealed. Yerby did not lose, however, the glance of reproach which the moonshiner cast upon the miller, nor the miller's air at once triumphant, ashamed, and regretful. He had in petulant pique disclosed the circumstance which he had pledged himself not to disclose.

"This man's name is Yerby too," Hilary said, significantly, gazing steadily at the miller.

The miller looked dumfounded for a moment. He stared from one to the other in silence. His conscious expression changed to obvious discomfiture. He had expected no such result as this. He had merely given way to a momentary spite in the disclosure, thinking it entirely insignificant, only calculated to slightly annoy Hilary, who had made the affair his own. He would not in any essential have thwarted his comrade's plans intentionally, nor in his habitual adherence to the principles of fair play would he have assisted in the boy's capture. He drew himself up from his relaxed posture; his spurred feet shuffled heavily on the stone floor of the grotto. A bright red spot appeared on each cheek; his eyes had become anxious and subdued in the quick shiftings of temper common to the red-haired gentry; his face of helpless appeal was bent on Hilary Tarbetts, as if relying on his resources to mend the matter; but ever and anon he turned his eyes, animated with a suspicious dislike, on Yerby, who, however, could have snapped his fingers in the faces of them all, so confident, so hilariously triumphant was he.

"Yerby, I b'lieve ye said yer name war, an' so did Peter Green," said Tarbetts, still kneeling by the open furnace door, his pale cheek reddening in the glow of the fire.

Thus reminded of the testimony of his acquaintance, Yerby did not venture to repudiate his cognomen.

"An' what did ye kem hyar fur?" blustered the miller. "A-sarchin' fur the boy?"

Yerby's lips had parted to acknowledge this fact, but Tarbetts suddenly anticipated his response, and answered for him:

"Oh no, Alfred. Nobody ain't sech a fool ez ter kem hyar ter this hyar still, a stranger an' mebbe suspected ez a spy, ter hunt up stray children, an' git thar heads shot off, or mebbe drowned in a mighty handy water-fall, or sech. This hyar man air one o' we-uns. He air a-tradin' fur our liquor, an' he'll kerry a barrel away whenst he goes."

Yerby winced at the suggestion conveyed so definitely in this crafty speech; he was glad when the door of the furnace closed, so that his face might not tell too much of the shifting thoughts and fears that possessed him.

The miller's fickle mind wavered once more. If Yerby had not come for the boy, he himself had done no damage in disclosing Leander's whereabouts. Once more his quickly illumined anger was kindled against Tarbetts, who had caused him a passing but poignant self-reproach. "Waal, then, Hilary," he demanded, "what air ye a-raisin' sech a row fur? Lee-yander ain't noways so special precious ez I knows on. Toler'ble lazy an' triflin', an' mightily gi'n over ter moonin' over a readin'-book he hev got. That thar mill war a-grindin' o' nuthin' at all more'n haffen ter-day, through me bein' a-nappin', and Lee-yander plumb demented by his book so ez he furgot ter pour enny grist inter the hopper. Shucks! his kin is welcome ter enny sech critter ez that, though I ain't denyin' ez he'd be toler'ble spry ef he could keep his nose out'n his book," he qualified, relenting, "or his fiddle out'n his hands. I made him leave his fiddle hyar ter the still, an' I be goin' ter hide his book."

"No need," thought Nehemiah, scornfully. Book and scholar and it might be fiddle too, so indulgent had the prospect of success made him, would by to-morrow be on the return route to the cross-roads. He even ventured to differ with the overbearing miller.

"I dun'no' 'bout that; books an' edication in gin'ral air toler'ble useful wunst in a while;" he was thinking of the dark art of dividing and multiplying by fractions. "The Yerbys hev always hed the name o' bein' quick at thar book."

Now the democratic sentiment in this country is bred in the bone, and few of its denizens have so diluted it with Christian grace as to

willingly acknowledge a superior. In such a coterie as this "eating humble-pie" is done only at the muzzle of a "shootin'-iron."

"Never hearn afore ez enny o' the Yerbys knowed B from bull-foot," remarked one of the unindividualized lumpish moonshiners, shadowy, indistinguishable in the circle about the rotund figure of the still. He yet retained acrid recollections of unavailing struggles with the alphabet, and was secretly of the opinion that education was a painful thing, and, like the yellow-fever or other deadly disease, not worth having. Nevertheless, since it was valued by others, the Yerbys should scathless make no unfounded claims. "Ef the truth war knowed, nare one of 'em afore could tell a book from a bear-trap."

Nehemiah's flush the darkness concealed; he moistened his thin lips, and then gave a little cackling laugh, as if he regarded this as pleasantry. But the demolition of the literary pretensions of his family once begun went bravely on.

"Abner Sage larnt this hyar boy all he knows," another voice took up the testimony. "Ab 'lows ez his mother war quick at school, but his dad--law! I knowed Ebenezer Yerby! He war a frien'ly sorter cuss, good-nachured an' kind-spoken, but ye could put all the larnin' he hed in the corner o' yer eye."

"An' Lee-yander don't favor none o' ye," observed another of the indiscriminated, unimportant members of the group, who seemed to the groping scrutiny of Nehemiah to be only endowed with sufficient identity to do the rough work of the still, and to become liable to the Federal law. "Thar's Hil'ry--he seen it right off. Hil'ry he tuk a look at Lee-yander whenst he wanted ter kem an' work along o' we-uns, 'kase his folks wanted ter take him away from the Sudleys. Hil'ry opened the furnace door--jes so; an' he cotch the boy by the arm"--the great brawny fellow, unconsciously dramatic, suited the action to the word, his face and figure illumined by the sudden red glow--"an' Hil'ry, he say, 'Naw, by God--ye hev got yer mother's eyes in yer head, an' I'll swear ye sha'n't larn ter be a sot!' An' that's how kem Hil'ry made Alf Bixby take Lee-yander ter work in the mill. Ef ennybody tuk arter him he war convenient ter disappear down hyar with we-uns. So he went ter the mill."

"An' I wisht I hed put him in the hopper an' ground him up," said the miller, in a blood-curdling tone, but with a look of plaintive anxiety in his eyes. "He hev made a heap o' trouble 'twixt Hil'ry an' me fust an' last. Whar's Hil'ry disappeared to, ennyways?"

For the flare from the furnace showed that this leading spirit amongst the moonshiners had gone softly out. Nehemiah, whose courage was dissipated by some subtle influence of his presence, now made bold to

ask, "An' what made him ter set store on Lee-yander's mother's eyes?" His tone was as bluffly sarcastic as he dared.

"Shucks--ye mus' hev hearn that old tale," said the miller, cavalierly. "This hyar Malviny Hixon--ez lived down in Tanglefoot Cove then--her an' Hil'ry war promised ter marry, but the revenueers captured him--he war a-runnin' a still in Tanglefoot then--an' they kep' him in jail somewhar in the North fur five year. Waal, she waited toler'ble constant fur two or three year, but Ebenezer Yerby he kem a-visitin' his kin down in Tanglefoot Cove, an' she an' him met at a bran dance, an' the fust thing I hearn they war married, an' 'fore Hil'ry got back she war dead an' buried, an' so war Ebenezer."

There was a pause while the flames roared in the furnace, and the falling water desperately dashed upon the rocks, and its tumultuous voice continuously pervaded the silent void wildernesses without, and the sibilant undertone, the lisping whisperings, smote the senses anew.

"He met up with cornosider'ble changes fur five year," remarked one of the men, regarding the matter in its chronological aspect.

Nehemiah said nothing. He had heard the story before, but it had been forgotten. A worldly mind like his is not apt to burden itself with the sentimental details of an antenuptial romance of the woman whom his half-brother had married many years ago.

A persuasion that it was somewhat unduly long-lived impressed others of the party.

"It's plumb cur'us Hil'ry ain't never furgot her," observed one of them. "He hev never married at all. My wife says it's jes contrariousness. Ef Malviny hed been his wife an' died, he'd hev married agin 'fore the year war out. An' I tell my wife that he'd hev been better acquainted with her then, an' would hev fund out ez no woman war wuth mournin' 'bout fur nigh twenty year. My wife says she can't make out ez how Hil'ry 'ain't got pride enough not ter furgive her fur givin' him the mitten like she done. An' I tell my wife that holdin' a gredge agin a woman fur bein' fickle is like holdin' a gredge agin her fur bein' a woman."

He paused with an air, perceived somehow in the brown dusk, of having made a very neat point. A stir of assent was vaguely suggested when some chivalric impulse roused a champion at the farther side of the worm, whose voice rang out brusquely:

"Jes listen at Tom! A body ter hear them tales he tells 'bout argufyin' with his wife would 'low he war a mighty smart, apt man, an' the pore foolish 'oman skeercely hed a sensible word ter bless herself with. When everybody that knows Tom knows he sings mighty small round home. Ye

stopped too soon, Tom. Tell what yer wife said to that."

Tom's embarrassed feet shuffled heavily on the rocks, apparently in search of subterfuge. The dazzling glintings from the crevices of the furnace door showed here and there gleaming teeth broadly agrin.

"Jes called me a fool in gineral," admitted the man skilled in argument.

"An' didn't she 'low ez men folks war fickle too, an' remind ye o' yer young days whenst ye went a-courtin' hyar an' thar, an' tell over a string o' gals' names till she sounded like an off'cer callin' the roll?"

"Ye-es," admitted Tom, thrown off his balance by this preternatural insight, "but all them gals war a-tryin' ter marry me--not me tryin' ter marry them."

There was a guffaw at this modest assertion, but the disaffected miller's tones dominated the rude merriment.

"Whenst a feller takes ter drink folks kin spell out a heap o' reasons but the true one--an' that's 'kase he likes it. Hil'ry 'ain't never named that 'oman's name ter me, an' I hev knowed him ez well ez ennybody hyar. Jes t'other day whenst that boy kem, bein' foolish an' maudlin, he seen suthin' oncommon in Lee-yander's eyes--they'll be mighty oncommon ef he keeps on readin' his tomfool book, ez he knows by heart, by the firelight when it's dim. Ef folks air so sot agin strong drink, let 'em drink less tharsefs. Hear Brother Peter Vickers preach agin liquor, an' ye'd know ez all wine-bibbers air bound fur hell."

"But the Bible don't name 'whiskey' once," said the man called Tom, in an argumentative tone. "Low wines I'll gin ye up;" he made the discrimination in accents betokening much reasonable admission; "but nare time does the Bible name whiskey, nor yit peach brandy, nor apple-jack."

"Nor cider nor beer," put in an unexpected recruit from the darkness.

The miller was silent for a moment, and gave token of succumbing to this unexpected polemic strength. Then, taking thought and courage together, "Ye can't say the Bible ain't down on 'strong drink'?" There was no answer from the vanquished, and he went on in the overwhelming miller's voice: "Hil'ry hed better be purtectin' hissself from strong drink, 'stiddier the boy--by makin' him stay up thar at the mill whar he knows thar's no drinkin' goin' on--ez will git chances at it other ways, ef not through him, in the long life he hev got ter live. The las' time the revenueers got Hil'ry 'twar through bein' ez drunk ez a fraish-biled owl. It makes me powerful oneasy whenever I know ye air all drunk an'

a-gallopadin' down hyar, an' no mo' able to act reasonable in case o' need an' purtect yersefs agin spies an' revenueurs an' sech 'n nuthin' in this worl'. The las' raid, ye 'member, we hed the still over yander;" he jerked his thumb in the direction present to his thoughts, but unseen by his coadjutors; "a man war wounded, an' we dun'no' but what killed in the scuffle, an' it mought be a hangin' matter ter git caught now. Ye oughter keep sober; an' ye know, Isham, ye oughter keep Hil'ry sober. I dun'no' why ye can't. I never could abide the nasty stuff--it's enough ter turn a bullfrog's stomach. Whiskey is good ter sell--not ter drink. Let them consarned idjits in the flat woods buy it, an' drink it. Whiskey is good ter sell--not ter drink."

This peculiar temperance argument was received in thoughtful silence, the reason of all the mountaineers commending it, while certain of them knew themselves and were known to be incapable of profiting by it.

Nehemiah had scant interest in this conversation. He was conscious of the strain on his attention as he followed it, that every point of the situation should be noted, and its utility canvassed at a leisure moment. He marked the allusion to the man supposed to have been killed in the skirmish with the raiders, and he appraised its value as coercion in any altercation that he might have in seeking to take Leander from his present guardians. But he felt in elation that this was likely to be of the slightest; the miller evidently found himself hampered rather than helped by the employment of the boy; and as to the moonshiner's sentimental partisanship, for the sake of an old attachment to the dead-and-gone mountain girl, there was hardly anything in the universe so tenuous as to bear comparison with its fragility. "A few drinks ahead," he said to himself, with a sneer, "an' he won't remember who Malviny Hixon was, ef thar is ennything in the old tale--which it's more'n apt thar ain't."

He began, after the fashion of successful people, to cavil because his success was not more complete. How the time was wasting here in this uncomfortable interlude! Why could he not have discovered Leander's whereabouts earlier, and by now be jogging along the road home with the boy by his side? Why had he not bethought himself of the mill in the first instance--that focus of gossip where all the news of the countryside is mysteriously garnered and thence dispensed bounteously to all comers? It was useless, as he fretted and chafed at these untoward omissions, to urge in his own behalf that he did not know of the existence of the mill, and that the miller, being an ungenial and choleric man, might have perversely lent himself to resisting his demand for the custody of the young runaway. No, he told himself emphatically, and with good logic, too, the miller's acrimony rose from the fact of a stranger's discovery of the still and the danger of his introduction into its charmed circle. And that reflection reminded him anew of his own danger here--not from the lawless denizens of the place, but from

the forces which he himself had evoked, and again he glanced out toward the water-fall as fearful of the raiders as any moonshiner of them all.

But what sudden glory was on the waters, mystic, white, an opaque brilliance upon the swirling foam and the bounding spray, a crystalline glitter upon the smooth expanse of the swift cataract! The moon was in the sky, and its light, with noiseless tread, sought out strange, lonely places, and illusions were astir in the solitudes. Pensive peace, thoughts too subtle for speech to shape, spiritual yearnings, were familiars of the hour and of this melancholy splendor; but he knew none of them, and the sight gave him no joy. He only thought that this was a night for the saddle, for the quiet invasion of the woods, when the few dwellers by the way-side were lost in slumber. He trembled anew at the thought of the raiders whom he himself had summoned; he forgot his curses on their laggard service; he upbraided himself again that he had not earlier made shift to depart by some means--by any means--before the night came with this great emblazoning bold-faced moon that but prolonged the day; and he started to his feet with a galvanic jerk and a sharp exclamation when swift steps were heard on the rocks outside, and a man with the lightness of a deer sprang down the ledges and into the great arched opening of the place.

"'Tain't nobody but Hil'ry," observed Isham Beaton, half in reproach, half in reassurance.

The pervasive light without dissipated in some degree the gloom within the grotto; a sort of gray visibility was on the appurtenances and the figures about the still, not strong enough to suggest color, but giving contour. His fright had been marked, he knew; a sort of surprised reflectiveness was in the manner of several of the moonshiners, and Nehemiah, with his ready fears, fancied that this inopportune show of terror had revived their suspicions of him. It required some effort to steady his nerves after this, and when footfalls were again audible outside, and all the denizens of the place sat calmly smoking their pipes without so much as a movement toward investigating the sound, he, knowing whose steps he had invited thither, had great ado with the coward within to keep still, as if he had no more reason to fear an approach than they.

A great jargon in the tone of ecstasy broke suddenly on the air upon this new entrance, shattering what little composure Nehemiah had been able to muster; a wide-mouthed exaggeration of welcome in superlative phrases and ready chorus. Swiftly turning, he saw nothing for a moment, for he looked at the height which a man's head might reach, and the new-comer measured hardly two feet in stature, waddled with a very uncertain gait, and although he bore himself with manifest complacency, he had evidently heard the like before, as he was jovially hailed by every ingratiating epithet presumed to be acceptable to his infant mind.

He was attended by a tall, gaunt boy of fifteen, barefooted, with snagged teeth and a shock of tow hair, wearing a shirt of unbleached cotton, and a pair of trousers supported by a single suspender drawn across a sharp, protuberant shoulder-blade behind and a very narrow chest in front. But his face was proud and happy and gleeful, as if he occupied some post of honor and worldly emolument in attending upon the waddling wonder on the floor in front of him, instead of being assigned the ungrateful task of seeing to it that a very ugly baby closely related to him did not, with the wiliness and ingenuity of infant nature, invent some method of making away with himself. For he was an ugly baby as he stood revealed in the flare of the furnace door, thrown open that his admirers and friends might feast their eyes upon him. His short wisps of red hair stood straight up in front; his cheeks were puffy and round, but very rosy; his eyes were small and dark, but blandly roguish; his mouth was wide and damp, and had in it a small selection of sample teeth, as it were; he wore a blue checked homespun dress garnished down the back with big horn buttons, sparsely set on; he clasped his chubby hands upon a somewhat pompous stomach; he sidled first to the right, then to the left, in doubt as to which of the various invitations he should accept.

"Kem hyar, Snooks!" "Right hyar, Toodles!" "Me hyar, Monkey Doodle!" "Hurrah fur the leetle-est moonshiner on record!" resounded fulsomely about him. Many were the compliments showered upon him, and if his flatterers told lies, they had told more wicked ones. The pipes all went out, and the broken-nosed pitcher languished in disuse as he trotted from one pair of outstretched arms to another to give an exhibition of his progress in the noble art of locomotion; and if he now and again sat down, unexpectedly to himself and to the spectator, he was promptly put upon his feet again with spurious applause and encouragement. He gave an exhibition of his dancing--a funny little shuffle of exceeding temerity, considering the facilities at his command for that agile amusement, but he was made reckless by praise--and they all lied valiantly in chorus. He repeated all the words he knew, which were few, and for the most part unintelligible, crowed like a cock, barked like a dog, mewed like a cat, and finally went away, his red cheeks yet more ruddily aglow, grave and excited and with quickly beating pulses, like one who has achieved some great public success and led captive the hearts of thousands.

The turmoils of his visit and his departure were great indeed. It all irked Nehemiah Yerby, who had scant toleration of infancy and little perception of the jocosity of the aspect of callow human nature, and it seemed strange to him that these men, all with their liberty, even their existence, jeopardized upon the chances that a moment might bring forth, could so relax their sense of danger, so disregard the mandates of stolid common-sense, and give themselves over to the puerile beguilements of the visitor. The little animal was the son of one of

them, he knew, but he hardly guessed whom until he marked the paternal pride and content that had made unwontedly placid the brow of the irate miller while the ovation was in progress. Nehemiah greatly preferred the adult specimen of the race, and looked upon youth as an infirmity which would mend only with time. He was easily confused by a stir; the gurglings, the ticklings, the loud laughter both in the deep bass of the hosts and the keen treble of the guest had a befuddling effect upon him; his powers of observation were numbed. As the great, burly forms shifted to and fro, resuming their former places, the red light from the open door of the furnace illumining their laughing, bearded countenances, casting a roseate suffusion upon the white turmoils of the cataract, and showing the rugged interior of the place with its damp and dripping ledges, he saw for the first time among them Leander's slight figure and smiling face; the violin was in his hand, one end resting on a rock as he tightened a string; his eyes were bent upon the instrument, while his every motion was earnestly watched by the would-be fiddler.

Nehemiah started hastily to his feet. He had not expected that the boy would see him here. To share with one of his own household a secret like this of aiding in illicit distilling was more than his hardihood could well contemplate. As once more the contemned "ping-pang" of the process of tuning fell upon the air, Leander chanced to lift his eyes. They smilingly swept the circle until they rested upon his uncle. They suddenly dilated with astonishment, and the violin fell from his nerveless hand upon the floor. The surprise, the fear, the repulsion his face expressed suddenly emboldened Nehemiah. The boy evidently had not been prepared for the encounter with his relative here. Its only significance to his mind was the imminence of capture and of being constrained to accompany his uncle home. He cast a glance of indignant reproach upon Hilary Tarbetts, who was not even looking at him. The moonshiner stood filling his pipe with tobacco, and as he deftly extracted a coal from the furnace to set it alight, he shut the door with a clash, and for a moment the whole place sunk into invisibility, the vague radiance vouchsafed to the recesses of the grotto by the moonbeams on the water without annihilated for the time by the contrast with the red furnace glare. Nehemiah had a swift fear that in this sudden eclipse Leander might slip softly out and thus be again lost to him, but as the dull gray light gradually reasserted itself, and the figures and surroundings emerged from the gloom, resuming shape and consistency, he saw Leander still standing where he had disappeared in the darkness; he could even distinguish his pale face and lustrous eyes. Leander at least had no intention to shirk explanations.

"Why, Uncle Nehemiah!" he said, his boyish voice ringing out tense and excited above the tones of the men, once more absorbed in their wonted interests. A sudden silence ensued amongst them. "What air ye a-doin' hyar?"

"Waal, ah, Lee-yander, boy--" Nehemiah hesitated. A half-suppressed chuckle among the men, whom he had observed to be addicted to horse-play, attested their relish of the situation. Ridicule is always of unfriendly intimations, and the sound served to put Nehemiah on his guard anew. He noticed that the glow in Hilary's pipe was still and dull: the smoker did not even draw his breath as he looked and listened. Yerby did not dare avow the true purpose of his presence after his representations to the moonshiners, and yet he could not, he would not in set phrase align himself with the illicit vocation. The boy was too young, too irresponsible, too inimical to his uncle, he reflected in a sudden panic, to be intrusted with this secret. If in his hap-hazard, callow folly he should turn informer, he was almost too young to be amenable to the popular sense of justice. He might, too, by some accident rather than intention, divulge the important knowledge so unsuitable to his years and his capacity for guarding it. He began to share the miller's aversion to the introduction of outsiders to the still. He felt a glow of indignation, as if he had always been a party in interest, that the common safety should not be more jealously guarded. The danger which Leander's youth and inexperience threatened had not been so apparent to him when he first heard that the boy had been here, and the menace was merely for the others. As he felt the young fellow's eyes upon him he recalled the effusive piety of his conversation at Tyler Sudley's house, his animadversions on violin-playing and liquor-drinking, and Brother Peter Vickers's mild and merciful attitude toward sinners in those unspiced sermons of his, that held out such affluence of hope to the repentant rather than to the self-righteous. The blood surged unseen into Nehemiah's face. For shame, for very shame he could not confess himself one with these outcasts. He made a feint of searching in the semi-obscurity for the rickety chair on which he had been seated, and resumed his former attitude as Leander's voice once more rang out:

"What air ye a-doin' hyar, Uncle Nehemiah?"

"Jes a-visitin', sonny; jes a-visitin'."

There was a momentary pause, and the felicity of the answer was demonstrated by another chuckle from the group. His senses, alert to the emergency, discriminated a difference in the tone. This time the laugh was with him rather than at him. He noted, too, Leander's dumfounded pause, and the suggestion of discomfiture in the boy's lustrous eyes, still widely fixed upon him. As Leander stooped to pick up the violin he remarked with an incidental accent, and evidently in default of retort, "I be powerful s'prised ter view ye hyar."

Nehemiah smarted under the sense of unmerited reproach; so definitely aware was he of being out of the character which he had assumed and worn until it seemed even to him his own, that he felt as if he were

constrained to some ghastly masquerade. Even the society of the moonshiners as their guest was a reproach to one who had always piously, and in such involuted and redundant verbiage, spurned the ways and haunts of the evil-doer. According to the dictates of policy he should have rested content with his advantage over the silenced lad. But his sense of injury engendered a desire of reprisal, and he impulsively carried the war into the enemy's country.

"I ain't in no ways s'prised ter view you-uns hyar, Lee-yander," he said. "From the ways, Lee-yander, ez ye hev been brung up by them slack-twisted Sudleys--ungodly folks 'ceptin' what little regeneration they kin git from the sermons of Brother Peter Vickers, who air onsartain in his mind whether folks ez ain't church-members air goin' ter be damned or no--I ain't s'prised none ter view ye hyar." He suddenly remembered poor Laurelia's arrogations of special piety, and it was with exceeding ill will that he added: "An' Mis' Sudley in partic'lar. Ty ain't no great shakes ez a shoutin' Christian. I dun'no' ez I ever hearn him shout once, but his wife air one o' the reg'lar, mournful, unrejicing members, always questioning the decrees of Providence, an' what ain't no nigher salvation, ef the truth war knowed, 'n a sinner with the throne o' grace yit ter find."

Leander had not picked up the violin; this disquisition had arrested his hand until his intention was forgotten. He came slowly to the perpendicular, and his eyes gleamed in the dusk. A vibration of anger was in his voice as he retorted:

"Mebbe so--mebbe they air sinners; but they'd look powerful comical 'visitin' hyar!"

"Ty Sudley ain't one o' the drinkin' kind," interpolated the miller, who evidently had the makings of a temperance man. "He never sot foot hyar in his life."

"Them ez kem a-visitin' hyar," blustered the boy, full of the significance of his observations and experience, "air either wantin' a drink or two 'thout payin' fur it, or else air tradin' fur liquor ter sell, an' that's the same ez moonshinin' in the law."

There was a roar of delight from the circle of lumpish figures about the still which told the boy that he had hit very near to the mark. Nehemiah hardly waited for it to subside before he made an effort to divert Leander's attention.

"An' what air _you-uns_ doin' hyar?" he demanded. "Tit for tat."

"Why," bluffly declared Leander, "I be a-runnin' away from you-uns. An' I 'lowed the still war one place whar I'd be sure o' not meetin' ye."

Not ez I hev got ennything agin moonshinin' nuther," he added, hastily, mindful of a seeming reflection on his refuge. "Moonshinin' _is business_, though the United States don't seem ter know it. But I hev hearn ye carry on so pious 'bout not lookin' on the wine whenst it be red, that I 'lowed ye wouldn't like ter look on the still whenst--whenst it's yaller." He pointed with a burst of callow merriment at the big copper vessel, and once more the easily excited mirth of the circle burst forth irrepressibly.

Encouraged by this applause, Leander resumed: "Why, _I_ even turns my back on the still myself out'n respec' ter the family--Cap'n an' Neighbor bein' so set agin liquor. Cap'n's ekal ter preachin' on it ef ennything onexpected war ter happen ter Brother Vickers. An' when I _hev_ ter view it, I look at it sorter cross-eyed." The flickering line of light from the crevice of the furnace door showed that he was squinting frightfully, with the much-admired eyes his mother had bequeathed to him, at the rotund shadow, with the yellow gleams of the metal barely suggested in the brown dusk. "So I tuk ter workin' at the mill. An' _I_ hev got nuthin' ter do with the still." There was a pause. Then, with a strained tone of appeal in his voice, for a future with Uncle Nehemiah had seemed very terrible to him, "So ye warn't a-sarchin' hyar fur me, war ye, Uncle Nehemiah?"

Nehemiah was at a loss. There is a peculiar glutinous quality in the resolve of a certain type of character which is not allied to steadfastness of purpose, nor has it the enlightened persistence of obstinacy. In view of his earlier account of his purpose he could not avow his errand; it bereft him of naught to disavow it, for Uncle Nehemiah was one of those gifted people who, in common parlance, do not mind what they say. Yet his reluctance to assure Leander that he was not the quarry that had led him into these wilds so mastered him, the spurious relinquishment had so the aspect of renunciation, that he hesitated, started to speak, again hesitated, so palpably that Hilary Tarbetts felt impelled to take a hand in the game.

"Why don't ye sati'fy the boy, Yerby?" he said, brusquely. He took his pipe out of his mouth and turned to Leander. "Naw, bub. He's jes tradin' fur bresh whiskey, that's all; he's sorter skeery 'bout bein' a wild-catter, an' he didn't want ye ter know it."

The point of red light, the glow of his pipe, the only exponent of his presence in the dusky recess where he sat, shifted with a quick, decisive motion as he restored it to his lips.

The blood rushed to Nehemiah's head; he was dizzy for a moment; he heard his heart thump heavily; he saw, or he fancied he saw, the luminous distention of Leander's eyes as this Goliath of his battles was thus delivered into his hands. To meet him here proved nothing; the law was

not violated by Nehemiah in the mere knowledge that illicit whiskey was in process of manufacture; a dozen different errands might have brought him. But this statement put a sword, as it were, into the boy's hands, and he dared not deny it.

"Pears ter me," he blurted out at last, "ez ye air powerful slack with yer jaw."

"Lee-yander ain't," coolly returned Tarbetts. "He knows all thar is ter know 'bout we-uns--an' why air ye not ter share our per'ls?"

"I ain't likely ter tell," Leander jocosely reassured him. "But I can't help thinkin' how it would rejice that good Christian 'oman, Cap'n Sudley, ez war made ter set on sech a low stool 'bout my pore old fiddle."

And thus reminded of the instrument, he picked it up, and once more, with the bow held aloft in his hand, he dexterously twanged the strings, and with his deft fingers rapidly and discriminatingly turned the screws, this one up and that one down. The earnest would-be musician, who had languished while the discussion was in progress, now plucked up a freshened interest, and begged that the furnace door might be set ajar to enable him to watch the process of tuning and perchance to detect its subtle secret. No objection was made, for the still was nearly empty, and arrangements tending to replenishment were beginning to be inaugurated by several of the men, who were examining the mash in tubs in the further recesses of the place. They were lighted by a lantern which, swinging to and fro as they moved, sometimes so swiftly as to induce a temporary fluctuation threatening eclipse, suggested in the dusk the erratic orbit of an abnormally magnified fire-fly. It barely glimmered, the dullest point of white light, when the rich flare from the opening door of the furnace gushed forth and the whole rugged interior was illumined with its color. The inadequate moonlight fell away; the chastened white splendor on the foam of the cataract, the crystalline glitter, timorously and elusively shifting, were annihilated; the swiftly descending water showed from within only a continuously moving glow of yellow light, all the brighter from the dark-seeming background of the world glimpsed without. A wind had risen, unfelt in these recesses and on the weighty volume of the main sheet of falling water, but at its verge the fitful gusts diverted its downward course, tossing slender jets aslant, and sending now and again a shower of spray into the cavern. Nehemiah remembered his rheumatism with a shiver. The shadows of the men, instead of an unintelligible comminglement with the dusk, were now sharp and distinct, and the light grotesquely duplicated them till the cave seemed full of beings who were not there a moment before--strange gnomes, clumsy and burly, slow of movement, but swift and mysterious of appearance and disappearance. The beetling ledges here and there imprinted strong black similitudes of

their jagged contours on the floor; with the glowing, weird illumination the place seemed far more uncanny than before, and Leander, with his face pensive once more in response to the gentle strains slowly elicited by the bow trembling with responsive ecstasy, his large eyes full of dreamy lights, his curling hair falling about his cheek as it rested upon the violin, his figure, tall and slender and of an adolescent grace, might have suggested to the imagination a reminiscence of Orpheus in Hades. They all listened in languid pleasure, without the effort to appraise the music or to compare it with other performances--the bane of more cultured audiences; only the ardent amateur, seated close at hand on a boulder, watched the bowing with a scrutiny which betokened earnest anxiety that no mechanical trick might elude him. The miller's half-grown son, whose ear for any fine distinctions in sound might be presumed to have been destroyed by the clamors of the mill, sat a trifle in the background, and sawed away on an imaginary violin with many flourishes and all the exaggerations of mimicry; he thus furnished the zest of burlesque relished by the devotees of horse-play and simple jests, and was altogether unaware that he had a caricature in his shadow just behind him, and was doing double duty in making both Leander and himself ridiculous. Sometimes he paused in excess of interest when the music elicited an amusement more to his mind than the long-drawn, pathetic cadences which the violinist so much affected. For in sudden changes of mood and in effective contrast the tones came showering forth in keen, quick staccato, every one as round and distinct as a globule, but as unindividualized in the swift exuberance of the whole as a drop in a summer's rain; the bow was but a glancing line of light in its rapidity, and the bounding movement of the theme set many a foot astir marking time. At last one young fellow, an artist too in his way, laid aside his pipe and came out to dance. A queer *_pas seul_* it might have been esteemed, but he was light and agile and not ungraceful, and he danced with an air of elation--albeit with a grave face--which added to the enjoyment of the spectator, for it seemed so slight an effort. He was long-winded, and was still bounding about in the double-shuffle and the pigeon-wing, his shadow on the wall nimbly following every motion, when the violin's cadence quavered off in a discordant wail, and Leander, the bow pointed at the water-fall, exclaimed: "Look out! Somebody's thar! Out thar on the rocks!"

It was upon the instant, with the evident intention of a surprise, that a dozen armed men rushed precipitately into the place. Nehemiah, his head awhirl, hardly distinguished the events as they were confusedly enacted before him. There were loud, excited calls, unintelligible, mouthing back in the turbulent echoes of the place, the repeated word "Surrender!" alone conveying meaning to his mind. The sharp, succinct note of a pistol-shot was a short answer. Some quick hand closed the door of the furnace and threw the place into protective gloom. He was vaguely aware that a prolonged struggle that took place amongst a group of men near him was the effort of the intruders to reopen it. All

unavailing. He presently saw figures drawing back to the doorway out of the _mêlée_, for moonshiner and raider were alike indistinguishable, and he became aware that both parties were equally desirous to gain the outer air. Once more pistol-shots--outside this time--then a tumult of frenzied voices. Struck by a pistol-ball, Tarbetts had fallen from the ledge under the weight of the cataract and into the deep abysses below. The raiders were swiftly getting to saddle again. Now and then a crack mountain shot drew a bead upon them from the bushes; but mists were gathering, the moon was uncertain, and the flickering beams deflected the aim. Two or three of the horses lay dead on the river-bank, and others carried double, ridden by men with riddled hats. They were in full retreat, for the catastrophe on the ledge of the cliff struck dismay to their hearts. Had the man been shot, according to the expectation of those who resist arrest, this would be merely the logical sequence of events. But to be hurled from a crag into a cataract savored of atrocity, and they dreaded the reprisals of capture.

It was soon over. The whole occurrence, charged with all the definitiveness of fate, was scant ten minutes in transition. A laggard hoof-beat, a faint echo amidst the silent gathering of the moonlit mists, and the loud plaint of Hoho-hebee Falls were the only sounds that caught Nehemiah's anxious ear when he crept out from behind the empty barrels and tremulously took his way along the solitary ledges, ever and anon looking askance at his shadow, that more than once startled him with a sense of unwelcome companionship. The mists, ever thickening, received him into their midst. However threatening to the retreat of the raiders, they were friendly to him. Once, indeed, they parted, showing through the gauzy involutions of their illumined folds the pale moon high in the sky, and close at hand a horse's head just above his own, with wild, dilated eyes and quivering nostrils. Its effect was as detached as if it were only drawn upon a canvas; the mists rolled over anew, and but that he heard the subdued voice of the rider urging the animal on, and the thud of the hoofs farther away, he might have thought this straggler from the revenue party some wild illusion born of his terrors.

The fate of Hilary Tarbetts remained a mystery. When the stream was dragged for his body it was deemed strange that it should not be found, since the bowlders that lay all adown the rocky gorge so interrupted the sweep of the current that so heavy a weight seemed likely to be caught amongst them. Others commented on the strength and great momentum of the flow, and for this reason it was thought that in some dark underground channel of Hide-and-Seek Creek the moonshiner had found his sepulchre. A story of his capture was circulated after a time; it was supposed that he dived and swam ashore after his fall, and that the raiders overtook him on their retreat, and that he was now immured, a Federal prisoner. The still and all the effects of the brush-whiskey trade disappeared as mysteriously, and doubtless this silent flitting gave rise to the

hopeful rumor that Tarbetts had been seen alive and well since that fateful night, and that in some farther recesses of the wilderness, undiscovered by the law, he and like comrades continue their chosen vocation. However that may be, the vicinity of Hoho-hebee Falls, always a lonely place, is now even a deeper solitude. The beavers, unmolested, haunt the ledges; along their precipitous ways the deer come down to drink; on bright days the rainbow hovers about the falls; on bright nights they glimmer in the moon; but never again have they glowed with the shoaling orange light of the furnace, intensifying to the deep tawny tints of its hot heart, like the rich glammers of some great topaz.

This alien glow it was thought had betrayed the place to the raiders, and Nehemiah's instrumentality was never discovered. The post-office appointment was bestowed upon his rival for the position, and it was thought somewhat strange that he should endure the defeat with such exemplary resignation. No one seemed to connect his candidacy with his bootless search for his nephew. When Leander chanced to be mentioned, however, he observed with some rancor that he reckoned it was just as well he didn't come up with Lee-yander; there was generally mighty little good in a runaway boy, and Lee-yander had the name of being disobejent an' turr'ble bad.

Leander found a warm welcome at home. His violin had been broken in the _mêlée_, and the miller, though ardently urged, never could remember the spot where he had hidden the book--such havoc had the confusion of that momentous night wrought in his mental processes. Therefore, unhampered by music or literature, Leander addressed himself to the plough-handles, and together that season he and "Neighbor" made the best crop of their lives.

Laurelia sighed for the violin and Leander's music, though, as she always made haste to say, some pious people misdoubted whether it were not a sinful pastime. On such occasions it went hard with Leander not to divulge his late experiences and the connection of the pious Uncle Nehemiah therewith. But he always remembered in time Laurelia's disability to receive confidences, being a woman, and consequently unable to keep a secret, and he desisted.

One day, however, when he and Ty Sudley, ploughing the corn, now knee-high, were pausing to rest in the turn-row, a few furrows apart, in an ebullition of filial feeling he told all that had befallen him in his absence. Ty Sudley, divided between wrath toward Nehemiah and quaking anxiety for the dangers that Leander had been constrained to run--_ex post facto_ tremors, but none the less acute--felt moved now and then to complacency in his prodigy.

"So 'twar _you-uns_ ez war smart enough ter slam the furnace door an' throw the whole place inter darkness! That saved them moonshiners and

raiders from killin' each other. It saved a deal o' bloodshed--ez sure ez shootin'. 'Twar mighty smart in ye. But"--suddenly bethinking himself of sundry unfilial gibes at Uncle Nehemiah and the facetious account of his plight--"Lee-yander, ye mustn't be so turr'ble bad, sonny; ye _mustn't_ be so _turr'ble_ bad."

"Naw, ma'am, Neighbor, I won't," Leander protested.

And he went on following the plough down the furrow and singing loud and clear.

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REGINALD ON WORRIES

by Hector 'Saki' Munro

I have (said Reginald) an aunt who worries. She's not really an aunt--a sort of amateur one, and they aren't really worries. She is a social success, and has no domestic tragedies worth speaking of, so she adopts any decorative sorrows that are going, myself included. In that way she's the antithesis, or whatever you call it, to those sweet, uncomplaining women one knows who have seen trouble, and worn blinkers ever since. Of course, one just loves them for it, but I must confess they make me uncomfy; they remind one so of a duck that goes flapping about with forced cheerfulness long after its head's been cut off. Ducks have _no_ repose. Now, my aunt has a shade of hair that suits her, and a cook who quarrels with the other servants, which is always a hopeful sign, and a conscience that's absentee for about eleven months of the year, and only turns up at Lent to annoy her husband's people, who are considerably Lower than the angels, so to speak: with all these natural advantages--she says her particular tint of bronze is a natural advantage, and there can be no two opinions as to the advantage--of course she has to send out for her afflictions, like those restaurants where they haven't got a licence. The system has this advantage, that you can fit your unhappinesses in with your other engagements, whereas real worries have a way of arriving at meal-times, and when you're dressing, or other solemn moments. I knew a canary once that had been

trying for months and years to hatch out a family, and everyone looked upon it as a blameless infatuation, like the sale of Delagoa Bay, which would be an annual loss to the Press agencies if it ever came to pass; and one day the bird really did bring it off, in the middle of family prayers. I say the middle, but it was also the end: you can't go on being thankful for daily bread when you are wondering what on earth very new canaries expect to be fed on.

At present she's rather in a Balkan state of mind about the treatment of the Jews in Roumania. Personally, I think the Jews have estimable qualities; they're so kind to their poor--and to our rich. I daresay in Roumania the cost of living beyond one's income isn't so great. Over here the trouble is that so many people who have money to throw about seem to have such vague ideas where to throw it. That fund, for instance, to relieve the victims of sudden disasters--what is a sudden disaster? There's Marion Mulciber, who would think she could play bridge, just as she would think she could ride down a hill on a bicycle; on that occasion she went to a hospital, now she's gone into a Sisterhood--lost all she had, you know, and gave the rest to Heaven. Still, you can't call it a sudden calamity; that occurred when poor dear Marion was born. The doctors said at the time that she couldn't live more than a fortnight, and she's been trying ever since to see if she could. Women are so opinionated.

And then there's the Education Question--not that I can see that there's anything to worry about in that direction. To my mind, education is an absurdly over-rated affair. At least, one never took it very seriously at school, where everything was done to bring it prominently under one's notice. Anything that is worth knowing one practically teaches oneself, and the rest obtrudes itself sooner or later. The reason one's elders know so comparatively little is because they have to unlearn so much that they acquired by way of education before we were born. Of course I'm a believer in Nature-study; as I said to Lady Beauwhistle, if you want a lesson in elaborate artificiality, just watch the studied unconcern of a Persian cat entering a crowded salon, and then go and practise it for a fortnight. The Beauwhistles weren't born in the Purple, you know, but they're getting there on the instalment system--so much down, and the rest when you feel like it. They have kind hearts, and they never forget birthdays. I forget what he was, something in the City, where the patriotism comes from; and she--oh, well, her frocks are built in Paris, but she wears them with a strong English accent. So public-spirited of her. I think she must have been very strictly brought up, she's so desperately anxious to do the wrong thing correctly. Not that it really matters nowadays, as I told her: I know some perfectly virtuous people who are received everywhere.

from The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Reginald*, by Saki



THE STORY OF IT

by Henry James

CHAPTER I

The weather had turned so much worse that the rest of the day was certainly lost. The wind had risen and the storm gathered force; they gave from time to time a thump at the firm windows and dashed even against those protected by the verandah their vicious splotches of rain. Beyond the lawn, beyond the cliff, the great wet brush of the sky dipped deep into the sea. But the lawn, already vivid with the touch of May, showed a violence of watered green; the budding shrubs and trees repeated the note as they tossed their thick masses, and the cold troubled light, filling the pretty saloon, marked the spring afternoon as sufficiently young. The two ladies seated there in silence could pursue without difficulty--as well as, clearly, without interruption--their respective tasks; a confidence expressed, when the noise of the wind allowed it to be heard, by the sharp scratch of Mrs. Dyott's pen at the table where she was busy with letters.

Her visitor, settled on a small sofa that, with a palm-tree, a screen, a stool, a stand, a bowl of flowers and three photographs in silver frames, had been arranged near the light wood-fire as a choice "corner"--Maud Blessingbourne, her guest, turned audibly, though at intervals neither brief nor regular, the leaves of a book covered in lemon-coloured paper and not yet despoiled of a certain fresh crispness. This effect of the volume, for the eye, would have made it, as presumably the newest French novel--and evidently, from the attitude of the reader, "good"--consort happily with the

special tone of the room, a consistent air of selection and suppression, one of the finer aesthetic evolutions. If Mrs. Dyott was fond of ancient French furniture and distinctly difficult about it, her inmates could be fond--with whatever critical cocks of charming dark-braided heads over slender sloping shoulders--of modern French authors. Nothing bad passed for half an hour--nothing at least, to be exact, but that each of the companions occasionally and covertly intermitted her pursuit in such a manner as to ascertain the degree of absorption of the other without turning round. What their silence was charged with therefore was not only a sense of the weather, but a sense, so to speak, of its own nature. Maud Blessingbourne, when she lowered her book into her lap, closed her eyes with a conscious patience that seemed to say she waited; but it was nevertheless she who at last made the movement representing a snap of their tension. She got up and stood by the fire, into which she looked a minute; then came round and approached the window as if to see what was really going on. At this Mrs. Dyott wrote with refreshed intensity. Her little pile of letters had grown, and if a look of determination was compatible with her fair and slightly faded beauty the habit of attending to her business could always keep pace with any excursion of her thought. Yet she was the first who spoke.

"I trust your book has been interesting."

"Well enough; a little mild."

A louder throb of the tempest had blurred the sound of the words.

"A little wild?"

"Dear no--timid and tame; unless I've quite lost my sense."

"Perhaps you have," Mrs. Dyott placidly suggested--"reading so many."

Her companion made a motion of feigned despair. "Ah you take away my courage for going to my room, as I was just meaning to, for another."

"Another French one?"

"I'm afraid."

"Do you carry them by the dozen--?"

"Into innocent British homes?" Maud tried to remember. "I believe I brought three--seeing them in a shop-window as I passed through town. It never rains but it pours! But I've already read two."

"And are they the only ones you do read?"

"French ones?" Maud considered. "Oh no. D'Annunzio."

"And what's that?" Mrs. Dyott asked as she affixed a stamp.

"Oh you dear thing!" Her friend was amused, yet almost showed pity. "I know you don't read," Maud went on; "but why should you? YOU live!"

"Yes--wretchedly enough," Mrs. Dyott returned, getting her letters together. She left her place, holding them as a neat achieved handful, and came over to the fire, while Mrs. Blessingbourne turned once more to the window, where she was met by another flurry.

Maud spoke then as if moved only by the elements. "Do you expect him through all this?"

Mrs. Dyott just waited, and it had the effect, indescribably, of making everything that had gone before seem to have led up to the question. This effect was even deepened by the way she then said "Whom do you mean?"

"Why I thought you mentioned at luncheon that Colonel Voyt was to walk over. Surely he can't."

"Do you care very much?" Mrs. Dyott asked.

Her friend now hesitated. "It depends on what you call 'much.' If you mean should I like to see him--then certainly."

"Well, my dear, I think he understands you're here."

"So that as he evidently isn't coming," Maud laughed, "it's particularly flattering! Or rather," she added, giving up the prospect again, "it would be, I think, quite extraordinarily flattering if he did. Except that of course," she threw in, "he might come partly for you."

"'Partly' is charming. Thank you for 'partly.' If you ARE going upstairs, will you kindly," Mrs Dyott pursued, "put these into the box as you pass?"

The younger woman, taking the little pile of letters, considered them with envy. "Nine! You ARE good. You're always a living reproach!"

Mrs. Dyott gave a sigh. "I don't do it on purpose. The only thing, this afternoon," she went on, reverting to the other question, "would be their not having come down."

"And as to that you don't know."

"No--I don't know." But she caught even as she spoke a rat-tat-tat of the knocker, which struck her as a sign. "Ah there!"

"Then I go." And Maud whisked out.

Mrs. Dyott, left alone, moved with an air of selection to the window, and it was as so stationed, gazing out at the wild weather, that the visitor, whose delay to appear spoke of the wiping of boots and the disposal of drenched mackintosh and cap, finally found her. He was tall lean fine, with little in him, on the whole, to confirm the titular in the "Colonel Voyt" by which he was announced. But he had left the army, so that his reputation for gallantry mainly depended now on his fighting Liberalism in the House of Commons. Even these facts, however, his aspect scantily matched; partly, no doubt, because he looked, as was usually said, un-English. His black hair, cropped close, was lightly powdered with silver, and his dense glossy beard, that of an emir or a caliph, and grown for civil reasons, repeated its handsome colour and its somewhat foreign effect. His nose had a strong and shapely arch, and the dark grey of his eyes was tinted with blue. It had been said of him--in relation to these signs--that he would have struck you as a Jew had he not, in spite of his nose, struck you so much as an Irishman. Neither responsibility could in fact have been fixed upon him, and just now, at all events, he was only a pleasant weather-washed wind-battered Briton, who brought in from a struggle with the elements that he appeared quite to have enjoyed a certain amount of unremoved mud and an unusual quantity of easy expression. It was exactly the silence ensuing on the retreat of the servant and the closed door that marked between him and his hostess the degree of this ease. They met, as it were, twice: the first time while the servant was there and the second as soon as he was not. The difference was great between the two encounters, though we must add in justice to the second that its marks were at first mainly negative. This communion consisted only in their having drawn each other for a minute as close as possible--as possible, that is, with no help but the full clasp of hands. Thus they were mutually held, and the closeness was at any rate such that, for a little, though it took account of dangers, it did without words. When words presently came the pair were talking by the fire and she had rung for tea. He had by this time asked if the note he had despatched to her after breakfast had been safely

delivered.

"Yes, before luncheon. But I'm always in a state when--except for some extraordinary reason--you send such things by hand. I knew, without it, that you had come. It never fails. I'm sure when you're there--I'm sure when you're not."

He wiped, before the glass, his wet moustache. "I see. But this morning I had an impulse."

"It was beautiful. But they make me as uneasy, sometimes, your impulses, as if they were calculations; make me wonder what you have in reserve."

"Because when small children are too awfully good they die? Well, I AM a small child compared to you--but I'm not dead yet. I cling to life."

He had covered her with his smile, but she continued grave. "I'm not half so much afraid when you're nasty."

"Thank you! What then did you do," he asked, "with my note?"

"You deserve that I should have spread it out on my dressing-table--or left it, better still, in Maud Blessingbourne's room."

He wondered while he laughed. "Oh but what does SHE deserve?"

It was her gravity that continued to answer. "Yes--it would probably kill her."

"She believes so in you?"

"She believes so in YOU. So don't be TOO nice to her."

He was still looking, in the chimney-glass, at the state of his beard--brushing from it, with his handkerchief, the traces of wind and wet. "If she also then prefers me when I'm nasty it seems to me I ought to satisfy her. Shall I now at any rate see her?"

"She's so like a pea on a pan over the possibility of it that she's pulling herself together in her room."

"Oh then we must try and keep her together. But why, graceful tender, pretty too--quite or almost as she is --doesn't she re-marry?"

Mrs. Dyott appeared--and as if the first time--to look for the

reason. "Because she likes too many men."

It kept up his spirits. "And how many MAY a lady like--?"

"In order not to like any of them too much? Ah that, you know, I never found out--and it's too late now. When," she presently pursued, "did you last see her?"

He really had to think. "Would it have been since last November or so?--somewhere or other where we spent three days."

"Oh at Surreidge? I know all about that. I thought you also met afterwards."

He had again to recall. "So we did! Wouldn't it have been somewhere at Christmas? But it wasn't by arrangement!" he laughed, giving with his forefinger a little pleasant nick to his hostess's chin. Then as if something in the way she received this attention put him back to his question of a moment before: "Have you kept my note?"

She held him with her pretty eyes. "Do you want it back?"

"Ah don't speak as if I did take things--!"

She dropped her gaze to the fire. "No, you don't; not even the hard things a really generous nature often would." She quitted, however, as if to forget that, the chimney-place. "I put it THERE!"

"You've burnt it? Good!" It made him easier, but he noticed the next moment on a table the lemon-coloured volume left there by Mrs. Blessingbourne, and, taking it up for a look, immediately put it down. "You might while you were about it have burnt that too."

"You've read it?"

"Dear yes. And you?"

"No," said Mrs. Dyott; "it wasn't for me Maud brought it."

It pulled her visitor up. "Mrs. Blessingbourne brought it?"

"For such a day as this." But she wondered. "How you look! Is it so awful?"

"Oh like his others." Something had occurred to him; his thought was already far. "Does she know?"

"Know what?"

"Why anything."

But the door opened too soon for Mrs. Dyott, who could only murmur quickly--"Take care!"

CHAPTER II

It was in fact Mrs. Blessingbourne, who had under her arm the book she had gone up for--a pair of covers showing this time a pretty, a candid blue. She was followed next minute by the servant, who brought in tea, the consumption of which, with the passage of greetings, inquiries and other light civilities between the two visitors, occupied a quarter of an hour. Mrs. Dyott meanwhile, as a contribution to so much amenity, mentioned to Maud that her fellow guest wished to scold her for the books she read--a statement met by this friend with the remark that he must first be sure about them. But as soon as he had picked up the new, the blue volume he broke out into a frank "Dear, dear!"

"Have you read that too?" Mrs. Dyott inquired. "How much you'll have to talk over together! The other one," she explained to him, "Maud speaks of as terribly tame."

"Ah I must have that out with her! You don't feel the extraordinary force of the fellow?" Voyt went on to Mrs. Blessingbourne.

And so, round the hearth, they talked--talked soon, while they warmed their toes, with zest enough to make it seem as happy a chance as any of the quieter opportunities their imprisonment might have involved. Mrs. Blessingbourne did feel, it then appeared, the force of the fellow, but she had her reserves and reactions, in which Voyt was much interested. Mrs. Dyott rather detached herself, mainly gazing, as she leaned back, at the fire; she intervened, however, enough to relieve Maud of the sense of being listened to. That sense, with Maud, was too apt to convey that one was listened to for a fool. "Yes, when I read a novel I mostly read a French one," she had said to Voyt in answer to a question about her usual practice; "for I seem with it to get hold more of the real thing--to get more life for my money. Only I'm not so infatuated with them but that sometimes for months and months on

end I don't read any fiction at all."

The two books were now together beside them. "Then when you begin again you read a mass?"

"Dear no. I only keep up with three or four authors."

He laughed at this over the cigarette he had been allowed to light. "I like your 'keeping up,' and keeping up in particular with 'authors.'"

"One must keep up with somebody," Mrs. Dyott threw off.

"I daresay I'm ridiculous," Mrs. Blessingbourne conceded without heeding it; "but that's the way we express ourselves in my part of the country."

"I only alluded," said Voyt, "to the tremendous conscience of your sex. It's more than mine can keep up with. You take everything too hard. But if you can't read the novel of British and American manufacture, heaven knows I'm at one with you. It seems really to show our sense of life as the sense of puppies and kittens."

"Well," Maud more patiently returned, "I'm told all sorts of people are now doing wonderful things; but somehow I remain outside."

"Ah it's THEY, it's our poor twangers and twaddlers who remain outside. They pick up a living in the street. And who indeed would want them in?"

Mrs. Blessingbourne seemed unable to say, and yet at the same time to have her idea. The subject, in truth, she evidently found, was not so easy to handle. "People lend me things, and I try; but at the end of fifty pages--"

"There you are! Yes--heaven help us!"

"But what I mean," she went on, "isn't that I don't get woefully weary of the eternal French thing. What's THEIR sense of life?"

"Ah voila!" Mrs. Dyott softly sounded.

"Oh but it IS one; you can make it out," Voyt promptly declared. "They do what they feel, and they feel more things than we. They strike so many more notes, and with so different a hand. When it comes to any account of a relation say between a man and a woman--I mean an intimate or a curious or a suggestive one--where are we

compared to them? They don't exhaust the subject, no doubt," he admitted; "but we don't touch it, don't even skim it. It's as if we denied its existence, its possibility. You'll doubtless tell me, however," he went on, "that as all such relations ARE for us at the most much simpler we can only have all round less to say about them."

She met this imputation with the quickest amusement. "I beg your pardon. I don't think I shall tell you anything of the sort. I don't know that I even agree with your premiss."

"About such relations?" He looked agreeably surprised. "You think we make them larger?--or subtler?"

Mrs. Blessingbourne leaned back, not looking, like Mrs. Dyott, at the fire, but at the ceiling. "I don't know what I think."

"It's not that she doesn't know," Mrs. Dyott remarked. "It's only that she doesn't say."

But Voyt had this time no eye for their hostess. For a moment he watched Maud. "It sticks out of you, you know, that you've yourself written something. Haven't you--and published? I've a notion I could read YOU."

"When I do publish," she said without moving, "you'll be the last one I shall tell. I HAVE," she went on, "a lovely subject, but it would take an amount of treatment--!"

"Tell us then at least what it is."

At this she again met his eyes. "Oh to tell it would be to express it, and that's just what I can't do. What I meant to say just now," she added, "was that the French, to my sense, give us only again and again, for ever and ever, the same couple. There they are once more, as one has had them to satiety, in that yellow thing, and there I shall certainly again find them in the blue."

"Then why do you keep reading about them?" Mrs. Dyott demanded.

Maud cast about. "I don't!" she sighed. "At all events, I shan't any more. I give it up."

"You've been looking for something, I judge," said Colonel Voyt, "that you're not likely to find. It doesn't exist."

"What is it?" Mrs. Dyott desired to know.

"I never look," Maud remarked, "for anything but an interest."

"Naturally. But your interest," Voyt replied, "is in something different from life."

"Ah not a bit! I LOVE life in art, though I hate it anywhere else. It's the poverty of the life those people show, and the awful bounders, of both sexes, that they represent."

"Oh now we have you!" her interlocutor laughed. "To me, when all's said and done, they seem to be--as near as art can come--in the truth of the truth. It can only take what life gives it, though it certainly may be a pity that that isn't better. Your complaint of their monotony is a complaint of their conditions. When you say we get always the same couple what do you mean but that we get always the same passion? Of course we do!" Voyt pursued. "If what you're looking for is another, that's what you won't anywhere find."

Maud for a while said nothing, and Mrs. Dyott seemed to wait. "Well, I suppose I'm looking, more than anything else, for a decent woman."

"Oh then you mustn't look for her in pictures of passion. That's not her element nor her whereabouts."

Mrs. Blessingbourne weighed the objection. "Does it not depend on what you mean by passion?"

"I think I can mean only one thing: the enemy to behaviour."

"Oh I can imagine passions that are on the contrary friends to it."

Her fellow-guest thought. "Doesn't it depend perhaps on what you mean by behaviour?"

"Dear no. Behaviour's just behaviour--the most definite thing in the world."

"Then what do you mean by the 'interest' you just now spoke of? The picture of that definite thing?"

"Yes--call it that. Women aren't ALWAYS vicious, even when they're--"

"When they're what?" Voyt pressed.

"When they're unhappy. They can be unhappy and good."

"That one doesn't for a moment deny. But can they be 'good' and interesting?"

"That must be Maud's subject!" Mrs. Dyott interposed. "To show a woman who IS. I'm afraid, my dear," she continued, "you could only show yourself."

"You'd show then the most beautiful specimen conceivable"--and Voyt addressed himself to Maud. "But doesn't it prove that life is, against your contention, more interesting than art? Life you embellish and elevate; but art would find itself able to do nothing with you, and, on such impossible terms, would ruin you."

The colour in her faint consciousness gave beauty to her stare. "'Ruin' me?"

"He means," Mrs. Dyott again indicated, "that you'd ruin 'art.'"

"Without on the other hand"--Voyt seemed to assent--"its giving at all a coherent impression of you."

"She wants her romance cheap!" said Mrs. Dyott.

"Oh no--I should be willing to pay for it. I don't see why the romance--since you give it that name--should be all, as the French inveterately make it, for the women who are bad."

"Oh they pay for it!" said Mrs. Dyott.

"DO they?"

"So at least"--Mrs. Dyott a little corrected herself--"one has gathered (for I don't read your books, you know!) that they're usually shown as doing."

Maud wondered, but looking at Voyt, "They're shown often, no doubt, as paying for their badness. But are they shown as paying for their romance?"

"My dear lady," said Voyt, "their romance is their badness. There isn't any other. It's a hard law, if you will, and a strange, but goodness has to go without that luxury. Isn't to BE good just exactly, all round, to go without?" He put it before her kindly and clearly--regretfully too, as if he were sorry the truth should be so sad. He and she, his pleasant eyes seemed to say, would, had they had the making of it, have made it better. "One has heard it before--at least I have; one has heard your question put. But always, when put to a mind not merely muddled, for an inevitable

answer. 'Why don't you, cher monsieur, give us the drama of virtue?' 'Because, chere madame, the high privilege of virtue is precisely to avoid drama.' The adventures of the honest lady? The honest lady hasn't, can't possibly have, adventures."

Mrs. Blessingbourne only met his eyes at first, smiling with some intensity. "Doesn't it depend a little on what you call adventures?"

"My poor Maud," said Mrs. Dyott as if in compassion for sophistry so simple, "adventures are just adventures. That's all you can make of them!"

But her friend talked for their companion and as if without hearing. "Doesn't it depend a good deal on what you call drama?" Maud spoke as one who had already thought it out. "Doesn't it depend on what you call romance?"

Her listener gave these arguments his very best attention. "Of course you may call things anything you like--speak of them as one thing and mean quite another. But why should it depend on anything? Behind these words we use--the adventure, the novel, the drama, the romance, the situation, in short, as we most comprehensively say--behind them all stands the same sharp fact which they all in their different ways represent."

"Precisely!" Mrs. Dyott was full of approval.

Maud however was full of vagueness. "What great fact?"

"The fact of a relation. The adventure's a relation; the relation's an adventure. The romance, the novel, the drama are the picture of one. The subject the novelist treats is the rise, the formation, the development, the climax and for the most part the decline of one. And what is the honest lady doing on that side of the town?"

Mrs. Dyott was more pointed. "She doesn't so much as FORM a relation."

But Maud bore up. "Doesn't it depend again on what you call a relation?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Dyott, "if a gentleman picks up her pocket-handkerchief--"

"Ah even that's one," their friend laughed, "if she has thrown it to him. We can only deal with one that is one."

"Surely," Maud replied. "But if it's an innocent one--"

"Doesn't it depend a good deal," Mrs. Dyott asked, "on what you call innocent?"

"You mean that the adventures of innocence have so often been the material of fiction? Yes," Voyt replied; "that's exactly what the bored reader complains of. He has asked for bread and been given a stone. What is it but, with absolute directness, a question of interest or, as people say, of the story? What's a situation undeveloped but a subject lost? If a relation stops, where's the story? If it doesn't stop, where's the innocence? It seems to me you must choose. It would be very pretty if it were otherwise, but that's how we flounder. Art is our flounderings shown."

Mrs. Blessingbourne--and with an air of deference scarce supported perhaps by its sketchiness--kept her deep eyes on this definition. "But sometimes we flounder out."

It immediately touched in Colonel Voyt the spring of a genial derision. "That's just where I expected YOU would! One always sees it come."

"He has, you notice," Mrs. Dyott parenthesised to Maud, "seen it come so often I; and he has always waited for it and met it."

"Met it, dear lady, simply enough! It's the old story, Mrs. Blessingbourne. The relation's innocent that the heroine gets out of. The book's innocent that's the story of her getting out. But what the devil--in the name of innocence--was she doing IN?"

Mrs. Dyott promptly echoed the question. "You have to be in, you know, to GET out. So there you are already with your relation. It's the end of your goodness."

"And the beginning," said Voyt, "of your play!"

"Aren't they all, for that matter, even the worst," Mrs. Dyott pursued, "supposed SOME time or other to get out? But if meanwhile they've been in, however briefly, long enough to adorn a tale?"

"They've been in long enough to point a moral. That is to point ours!" With which, and as if a sudden flush of warmer light had moved him, Colonel Voyt got up. The veil of the storm had parted over a great red sunset.

Mrs. Dyott also was on her feet, and they stood before his charming

antagonist, who, with eyes lowered and a somewhat fixed smile, had not moved.

"We've spoiled her subject!" the elder lady sighed.

"Well," said Voyt, "it's better to spoil an artist's subject than to spoil his reputation. I mean," he explained to Maud with his indulgent manner, "his appearance of knowing what he has got hold of, for that, in the last resort, is his happiness."

She slowly rose at this, facing him with an aspect as handsomely mild as his own. "You can't spoil my happiness."

He held her hand an instant as he took leave. "I wish I could add to it!"

CHAPTER III

When he had quitted them and Mrs. Dyott had candidly asked if her friend had found him rude or crude, Maud replied--though not immediately--that she had feared showing only too much how charming she found him. But if Mrs. Dyott took this it was to weigh the sense. "How could you show it too much?"

"Because I always feel that that's my only way of showing anything. It's absurd, if you like," Mrs. Blessingbourne pursued, "but I never know, in such intense discussions, what strange impression I may give."

Her companion looked amused. "Was it intense?"

"_I_ was," Maud frankly confessed.

"Then it's a pity you were so wrong. Colonel Voyt, you know, is right." Mrs. Blessingbourne at this gave one of the slow soft silent headshakes to which she often resorted and which, mostly accompanied by the light of cheer, had somehow, in spite of the small obstinacy that smiled in them, a special grace. With this grace, for a moment, her friend, looking her up and down, appeared impressed, yet not too much so to take the next minute a decision. "Oh my dear, I'm sorry to differ from any one so lovely--for you're awfully beautiful to-night, and your frock's the very nicest I've ever seen you wear. But he's as right as he can be."

Maud repeated her motion. "Not so right, at all events as he thinks he is. Or perhaps I can say," she went on, after an instant, "that I'm not so wrong. I do know a little what I'm talking about."

Mrs. Dyott continued to study her. "You ARE vexed. You naturally don't like it--such destruction."

"Destruction?"

"Of your illusion."

"I HAVE no illusion. If I had moreover it wouldn't be destroyed. I have on the whole, I think, my little decency."

Mrs. Dyott stared. "Let us grant it for argument. What, then?"

"Well, I've also my little drama."

"An attachment ?"

"An attachment."

"That you shouldn't have?"

"That I shouldn't have."

"A passion?"

"A passion."

"Shared?"

"Ah thank goodness, no!"

Mrs. Dyott continued to gaze. "The object's unaware--?"

"Utterly."

Mrs. Dyott turned it over. "Are you sure?"

"Sure."

"That's what you call your decency? But isn't it," Mrs. Dyott asked, "rather his?"

"Dear no. It's only his good fortune."

Mrs. Dyott laughed. "But yours, darling--your good fortune: where does THAT come in?"

"Why, in my sense of the romance of it."

"The romance of what? Of his not knowing?"

"Of my not wanting him to. If I did"--Maud had touchingly worked it out--"where would be my honesty?"

The inquiry, for an instant, held her friend, yet only, it seemed, for a stupefaction that was almost amusement. "Can you want or not want as you like? Where in the world, if you don't want, is your romance?"

Mrs. Blessingbourne still wore her smile, and she now, with a light gesture that matched it, just touched the region of her heart. "There!"

Her companion admiringly marvelled. "A lovely place for it, no doubt!--but not quite a place, that I can see, to make the sentiment a relation."

"Why not? What more is required for a relation for me?"

"Oh all sorts of things, I should say! And many more, added to those, to make it one for the person you mention."

"Ah that I don't pretend it either should be or CAN be. I only speak for myself."

This was said in a manner that made Mrs. Dyott, with a visible mixture of impressions, suddenly turn away. She indulged in a vague movement or two, as if to look for something; then again found herself near her friend, on whom with the same abruptness, in fact with a strange sharpness, she conferred a kiss that might have represented either her tribute to exalted consistency or her idea of a graceful close of the discussion. "You deserve that one should speak FOR you!"

Her companion looked cheerful and secure. "How CAN you without knowing--?"

"Oh by guessing! It's not--?"

But that was as far as Mrs. Dyott could get. "It's not," said Maud, "any one you've ever seen."

"Ah then I give you up!"

And Mrs. Dyott conformed for the rest of Maud's stay to the spirit of this speech. It was made on a Saturday night, and Mrs. Blessingbourne remained till the Wednesday following, an interval during which, as the return of fine weather was confirmed by the Sunday, the two ladies found a wider range of action. There were drives to be taken, calls made, objects of interest seen at a distance; with the effect of much easy talk and still more easy silence. There had been a question of Colonel Voyt's probable return on the Sunday, but the whole time passed without a sign from him, and it was merely mentioned by Mrs. Dyott, in explanation, that he must have been suddenly called, as he was so liable to be, to town. That this in fact was what had happened he made clear to her on Thursday afternoon, when, walking over again late, he found her alone. The consequence of his Sunday letters had been his taking, that day, the 4.15. Mrs. Voyt had gone back on Thursday, and he now, to settle on the spot the question of a piece of work begun at his place, had rushed down for a few hours in anticipation of the usual collective move for the week's end. He was to go up again by the late train, and had to count a little--a fact accepted by his hostess with the hard pliancy of practice--his present happy moments. Too few as these were, however, he found time to make of her an inquiry or two not directly bearing on their situation. The first was a recall of the question for which Mrs. Blessingbourne's entrance on the previous Saturday had arrested her answer. Had that lady the idea of anything between them?

"No. I'm sure. There's one idea she has got," Mrs. Dyott went on; "but it's quite different and not so very wonderful."

"What then is it?"

"Well, that she's herself in love."

Voyt showed his interest. "You mean she told you?"

"I got it out of her."

He showed his amusement. "Poor thing! And with whom?"

"With you."

His surprise, if the distinction might be made, was less than his wonder. "You got that out of her too?"

"No--it remains in. Which is much the best way for it. For you to know it would be to end it."

He looked rather cheerfully at sea. "Is that then why you tell me?"

"I mean for her to know you know it. Therefore it's in your interest not to let her."

"I see," Voyt after a moment returned. "Your real calculation is that my interest will be sacrificed to my vanity--so that, if your other idea is just, the flame will in fact, and thanks to her morbid conscience, expire by her taking fright at seeing me so pleased. But I promise you," he declared, "that she shan't see it. So there you are!" She kept her eyes on him and had evidently to admit after a little that there she was. Distinct as he had made the case, however, he wasn't yet quite satisfied. "Why are you so sure I'm the man?"

"From the way she denies you."

"You put it to her?"

"Straight. If you hadn't been she'd of course have confessed to you--to keep me in the dark about the real one."

Poor Voyt laughed out again. "Oh you dear souls!"

"Besides," his companion pursued, "I wasn't in want of that evidence."

"Then what other had you?"

"Her state before you came--which was what made me ask you how much you had seen her. And her state after it," Mrs. Dyott added. "And her state," she wound up, "while you were here."

"But her state while I was here was charming."

"Charming. That's just what I say."

She said it in a tone that placed the matter in its right light--a light in which they appeared kindly, quite tenderly, to watch Maud wander away into space with her lovely head bent under a theory rather too big for it. Voyt's last word, however, was that there was just enough in it--in the theory--for them to allow that she had not shown herself, on the occasion of their talk, wholly bereft of sense. Her consciousness, if they let it alone--as they of course after this mercifully must--WAS, in the last analysis, a kind of shy romance. Not a romance like their own, a thing to make

the fortune of any author up to the mark--one who should have the invention or who COULD have the courage; but a small scared starved subjective satisfaction that would do her no harm and nobody else any good. Who but a duffer--he stuck to his contention--would see the shadow of a "story" in it?

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WHY THOMAS WAS DISCHARGED

by George Arnold

Brant Beach is a long promontory of rock and sand, jutting out at an acute angle from a barren portion of the coast. Its farthest extremity is marked by a pile of many-colored, wave-washed boulders; its junction with the mainland is the site of the Brant House, a watering-place of excellent repute.

The attractions of this spot are not numerous. There is surf-bathing all along the outer side of the beach, and good swimming on the inner. The fishing is fair; and in still weather yachting is rather a favorite amusement. Further than this there is little to be said, save that the hotel is conducted upon liberal principles, and the society generally select.

But to the lover of nature--and who has the courage to avow himself aught else?--the sea-shore can never be monotonous. The swirl and sweep of ever-shifting waters, the flying mist of foam breaking away into a gray and ghostly distance down the beach, the eternal drone of ocean, mingling itself with one's talk by day and with the light dance-music in the parlors by night--all these are active sources of a passive pleasure. And to lie at length upon the tawny sand, watching, through half-closed eyes, the heaving waves, that mount against a dark blue sky wherein great silvery masses of cloud float idly on, whiter than the sunlit sails that fade and grow and fade along the horizon, while some fair damsel sits close by, reading ancient ballads of a simple metre, or older legends of love and romance--tell me, my eater of the fashionable lotos, is not this a diversion well worth your having?

There is an air of easy sociality among the guests at the Brant House, a disposition on the part of all to contribute to the general amusement, that makes a summer sojourn on the beach far more agreeable than in certain larger, more frequented watering-places, where one is always in danger of discovering that the gentlemanly person with whom he has been fraternizing is a faro-dealer, or that the lady who has half-fascinated him is Anonyma herself. Still, some consider the Brant rather slow, and many good folk were a trifle surprised when Mr. Edwin Salsbury and Mr. Charles Burnham arrived by the late stage from Wikhasset Station, with trunks enough for two first-class belles, and a most unexceptionable man-servant in gray livery, in charge of two beautiful setter-dogs.

These gentlemen seemed to have imagined that they were about visiting some backwoods wilderness, some savage tract of country, "remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow," for they brought almost everything with them that men of elegant leisure could require, as if the hotel were but four walls and a roof, which they must furnish with their own chattels. I am sure it took Thomas, the man-servant, a whole day to unpack the awnings, the bootjacks, the game-bags, the cigar-boxes, the guns, the camp-stools, the liquor-cases, the bathing-suits, and other paraphernalia that these pleasure-seekers brought. It must be owned, however, that their room, a large one in the Bachelors' Quarter, facing the sea, wore a very comfortable, sportsmanlike look when all was arranged.

Thus surrounded, the young men betook themselves to the deliberate pursuit of idle pleasures. They arose at nine and went down the shore, invariably returning at ten with one unfortunate snipe, which was preserved on ice, with much ceremony, till wanted. At this rate it took them a week to shoot a breakfast; but to see them sally forth, splendid in velveteen and corduroy, with top-boots and a complete harness of green cord and patent-leather straps, you would have imagined that all game-birds were about to become extinct in that region. Their dogs, even, recognized this great-cry-little-wool condition of things, and bounded off joyously at the start, but came home crestfallen, with an air of canine humiliation that would have aroused Mr. Mayhew's tenderest sympathies.

After breakfasting, usually in their room, the friends enjoyed a long and contemplative smoke upon the wide piazza in front of their windows, listlessly regarding the ever-varied marine view that lay before them in flashing breadth and beauty. Their next labor was to array themselves in wonderful morning-costumes of very shaggy English cloth, shiny flasks and field-glasses about their shoulders, and loiter down the beach, to the point and back, making much unnecessary effort over the walk--a brief mile--which they spoke of, with importance, as their "constitutional." This killed time till bathing-hour, and then another toilet for dinner. After dinner a siesta: in the room, when the weather

was fresh; when otherwise, in hammocks hung from the rafters of the piazza. When they had been domiciled a few days, they found it expedient to send home for what they were pleased to term their "crabs" and "traps," and excited the envy of less fortunate guests by driving up and down the beach at a racing gait to dissipate the languor of the after-dinner sleep.

This was their regular routine for the day--varied, occasionally, when the tide served, by a fishing trip down the narrow bay inside the point. For such emergencies they provided themselves with a sail-boat and skipper, hired for the whole season, and arrayed themselves in a highly nautical rig. The results were, large quantities of sardines and pale sherry consumed by the young men, and a reasonable number of sea-bass and blackfish caught by the skipper.

There were no regular "hops" at the Brant House, but dancing in a quiet way every evening to a flute, violin, and violoncello, played by some of the waiters. For a time Burnham and Salsbury did not mingle much in these festivities, but loitered about the halls and piazzas, very elegantly dressed and barbered (Thomas was an unrivalled _coiffeur_), and apparently somewhat _ennuyé_.

That two well-made, full-grown, intelligent, and healthy young men should lead such a life as this for an entire summer might surprise one of a more active temperament. The aimlessness and vacancy of an existence devoted to no earthly purpose save one's own comfort must soon weary any man who knows what is the meaning of real, earnest life--life with a battle to be fought and a victory to be won. But these elegant young gentlemen comprehended nothing of all that: they had been born with golden spoons in their mouths, and educated only to swallow the delicately insipid lotos-honey that flows inexhaustibly from such shining spoons. Clothes, complexions, polish of manner, and the avoidance of any sort of shock were the simple objects of their solicitude.

I do not know that I have any serious quarrel with such fellows, after all. They have strong virtues. They are always clean; and your rough diamond, though manly and courageous as Coeur de Lion, is not apt to be scrupulously nice in his habits. Affability is another virtue. The Salsbury and Burnham kind of man bears malice toward no one, and is disagreeable only when assailed by some hammer-and-tongs utilitarian. All he asks is to be permitted to idle away his pleasant life unmolested. Lastly, he is extremely ornamental. We all like to see pretty things; and I am sure that Charley Burnham, in his fresh white duck suit, with his fine, thoroughbred face--gentle as a girl's--shaded by a snowy Panama, his blonde moustache carefully pointed, his golden hair clustering in the most picturesque possible waves, his little red neck-ribbon--the only bit of color in his dress--tied in a studiously

careless knot, and his pure, untainted gloves of pearl gray or lavender, was, if I may be allowed the expression, just as pretty as a picture. And Ned Salsbury was not less "a joy forever," according to the dictum of the late Mr. Keats. He was darker than Burnham, with very black hair, and a moustache worn in the manner the French call *_triste_*, which became him, and increased the air of pensive melancholy that distinguished his dark eyes, thoughtful attitudes, and slender figure. Not that he was in the least degree pensive or melancholy, or that he had cause to be; quite the contrary; but it was his style, and he did it well.

These two butterflies sat, one afternoon, upon the piazza, smoking very large cigars, lost, apparently, in profoundest meditation. Burnham, with his graceful head resting upon one delicate hand, his clear blue eyes full of a pleasant light, and his face warmed by a calm, unconscious smile, might have been revolving some splendid scheme of universal philanthropy. The only utterance, however, forced from him by the sublime thoughts that permeated his soul, was the emission of a white rolling volume of fragrant smoke, accompanied by two words: "Doocéé hot!"

Salsbury did not reply. He sat, leaning back, with his fingers interlaced behind his head, and his shadowy eyes downcast, as in sad remembrance of some long-lost love. So might a poet have looked, while steeped in mournfully rapturous daydreams of remembered passion and severance. So might Tennyson's hero have mused, while he sang:

"Oh, that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!"

But the poetic lips opened not to such numbers. Salsbury gazed long and earnestly, and finally gave vent to his emotion, indicating, with the amber tip of his cigar-tube, the setter that slept in the sunshine at his feet.

"Shocking place, this, for dogs!"--I regret to say he pronounced it "dawgs"--"Why, Carlo is as fat--as fat as--as a--"

His mind was unequal to a simile even, and he terminated the sentence in a murmur.

More silence; more smoke; more profound meditation. Directly Charley Burnham looked around with some show of vitality.

"There comes the stage," said he.

The driver's bugle rang merrily among the drifted sand-hills that lay warm and glowing in the orange light of the setting sun. The young men leaned forward over the piazza-rail and scrutinized the occupants of the vehicle as it appeared.

"Old gentleman and lady, aw, and two children," said Ned Salisbury; "I hoped there would be some nice girls."

This, in a voice of ineffable tenderness and poetry, but with that odd, tired little drawl, so epidemic in some of our universities.

"Look there, by Jove!" cried Charley, with a real interest at last; "now that's what I call a regular thing!"

The "regular thing" was a low, four-wheeled pony-chaise of basket-work, drawn by two jolly little fat ponies, black and shiny as vulcanite, which jogged rapidly in, just far enough behind the stage to avoid its dust.

This vehicle was driven by a young lady of decided beauty, with a spice of Amazonian spirit. She was rather slender and very straight, with a jaunty little hat and feather perched coquettishly above her dark brown hair, which was arranged in one heavy mass and confined in a silken net. Her complexion was clear, without brilliancy; her eyes blue as the ocean horizon, and spanned by sharp, characteristic brows; her mouth small and decisive; and her whole cast of features indicative of quick talent and independence.

Upon the seat beside her sat another damsel, leaning indolently back in the corner of the carriage. This one was a little fairer than the first, having one of those beautiful English complexions of mingled rose and snow, and a dash of gold-dust in her hair where the sun touched it. Her eyes, however, were dark hazel and full of fire, shaded and intensified by their long, sweeping lashes. Her mouth was a rosebud, and her chin and throat faultless in the delicious curve of their lines. In a word, she was somewhat of the Venus-di-Milo type; her companion was more of a Diana. Both were neatly habited in plain travelling-dresses and cloaks of black and white plaid, and both seemed utterly unconscious of the battery of eyes and eye-glasses that enfiladed them from the whole length of the piazza as they passed.

"Who are they?" asked Salisbury; "I don't know them."

"Nor I," said Burnham; "but they look like people to know. They must be somebody."

Half an hour later the hotel-office was besieged by a score of young men, all anxious for a peep at the last names upon the register. It is

needless to say that our friends were not in the crowd. Ned Salsbury was no more the man to exhibit curiosity than Charley Burnham was the man to join in a scramble for anything under the sun. They had educated their emotions clear down, out of sight, and piled upon them a mountain of well-bred inertia.

But, somehow or other, these fellows who take no trouble are always the first to gain the end. A special Providence seems to aid the poor, helpless creatures. So, while the crowd still pressed at the office-desk, Jerry Swayne, the head clerk, happened to pass directly by the piazza where the inert ones sat, and, raising a comical eye, saluted them.

"Heavy arrivals to-night. See the turnout?"

"Y-e-s," murmured Ned.

"Old Chapman and family. His daughter drove the pony-phaeton, with her friend, a Miss Thurston. Regular nobby ones. Chapman's the steam-ship man, you know. Worth thousands of millions! I'd like to be connected with his family--by marriage, say!"--and Jerry went off, rubbing his cropped head and smiling all over, as was his wont.

"I know who they are now," said Charley. "Met a cousin of theirs, Joe Faulkner, abroad two years ago. Doocéd fine fellow. Army."

The manly art of wagoning is not pursued vigorously at Brant Beach. The roads are too heavy back from the water, and the drive is confined to a narrow strip of wet sand along the shore; so carriages are few, and the pony-chaise became a distinguished element at once. Salsbury and Burnham whirled past it in their light trotting-wagons at a furious pace, and looked hard at the two young ladies in passing, but without eliciting even the smallest glance from them in return.

"Confounded _distingué_-looking girls, and all that," owned Ned, "but, aw, fearfully unconscious of a fellow!"

This condition of matters continued until the young men were actually driven to acknowledge to each other that they should not mind knowing the occupants of the pony carriage. It was a great concession, and was rewarded duly. A bright, handsome boy of seventeen, Miss Thurston's brother, came to pass a few days at the seaside, and fraternized with everybody, but was especially delighted with Ned Salsbury, who took him out sailing and shooting, and, I am afraid, gave him cigars stealthily, when out of range of Miss Thurston's fine eyes. The result was that the first time the lad walked on the beach with the two girls and met the young man, introductions of an enthusiastic nature were instantly sprung upon them. An attempt at conversation followed.

"How do you like Brant Beach?" asked Ned.

"Oh, it is a very pretty place," said Miss Chapman, "but not lively enough."

"Well, Burnham and I find it pleasant; aw, we have lots of fun."

"Indeed! Why, what do you do?"

"Oh, I don't know. Everything."

"Is the shooting good? I saw you with your guns yesterday."

"Well, there isn't a great deal of game. There is some fishing, but we haven't caught much."

"How do you kill time, then?"

Salsbury looked puzzled.

"Aw--it is a first-rate air, you know. The table is good, and you can sleep like a top. And then, you see, I like to smoke around, and do nothing, on the sea-shore. It is real jolly to lie on the sand, aw, with all sorts of little bugs running over you, and listen to the water swashing about!"

"Let's try it!" cried vivacious Miss Chapman; and down she sat on the sand. The others followed her example, and in five minutes they were picking up pretty pebbles and chatting away as sociably as could be. The rumbling of the warning gong surprised them.

At dinner Burnham and Salsbury took seats opposite the ladies, and were honored with an introduction to papa and mamma, a very dignified, heavy, rosy, old-school couple, who ate a good deal and said very little. That evening, when flute and viol wooed the lotos-eaters to agitate the light fantastic toe, these young gentlemen found themselves in dancing humor, and revolved themselves into a grievous condition of glow and wilt in various mystic and intoxicating measures with their new-made friends.

On retiring, somewhat after midnight, Miss Thurston paused while "doing her hair," and addressed Miss Chapman.

"Did you observe, Hattie, how very handsome those gentlemen are? Mr. Burnham looks like a prince of the _sang azur_, and Mr. Salsbury like his poet-laureate."

"Yes, dear," responded Hattie; "I have been considering those flowers of

the field and lilies of the valley."

"Ned," said Charlie, at about the same time, "we won't find anything nicer here this season, I think."

"They're pretty worth while," replied Ned, "and I'm rather pleased with them."

"Which do you like best?"

"Oh, bother! I haven't thought of _that_ yet."

The next day the young men delayed their "constitutional" until the ladies were ready to walk, and the four strolled off together, mamma and the children following in the pony-chaise. At the rocks on the end of the point Ned got his feet very wet fishing up specimens of seaweed for the damsels; and Charley exerted himself super-humanly in assisting them to a ledge which they considered favorable for sketching purposes.

In the afternoon a sail was arranged, and they took dinner on board the boat, with any amount of hilarity and a good deal of discomfort. In the evening more dancing and vigorous attentions to both the young ladies, but without a shadow of partiality being shown by either of the four.

This was very nearly the history of many days. It does not take long to get acquainted with people who are willing, especially at watering-places; and in the course of a few weeks these young folks were, to all intents and purposes, old friends--calling each other by their given names, and conducting themselves with an easy familiarity quite charming to behold. Their amusements were mostly in common now. The light wagons were made to hold two each instead of one, and the matinal snipe escaped death, and was happy over his early worm.

One day, however, Laura Thurston had a headache, and Hattie Chapman stayed at home to take care of her; so Burnham and Salisbury had to amuse themselves alone. They took their boat and idled about the waters inside the point, dozing under an awning, smoking, gaping, and wishing that headaches were out of fashion, while the taciturn and tarry skipper instructed the dignified and urbane Thomas in the science of trolling for blue-fish.

At length Ned tossed his cigar-end overboard and braced himself for an effort.

"I say, Charlie," said he, "this sort of thing can't go on forever, you know. I've been thinking lately."

"Phenomenon!" replied Charlie; "and what have you been thinking about?"

"Those girls. We've got to choose."

"Why? Isn't it well enough as it is?"

"Yes--so far. But I think, aw, that we don't quite do them justice. They're _grands partis_, you see. I hate to see clever girls wasting themselves on society, waiting and waiting, and we fellows swimming about just like fish around a hook that isn't baited properly."

Charley raised himself upon his elbow.

"You don't mean to tell me, Ned, that you have matrimonial intentions?"

"Oh, no! Still, why not? We've all got to come to it some day, I suppose."

"Not yet, though. It is a sacrifice we can escape for some years yet."

"Yes--of course--some years; but we may begin to look about us a bit. I'm, aw, I'm six and twenty, you know."

"And I'm very near that. I suppose a fellow can't put off the yoke too long. After thirty chances aren't so good. I don't know, by Jove! but what we ought to begin thinking of it."

"But it _is_ a sacrifice. Society must lose a fellow, though, one time or another. And I don't believe we will ever do better than we can now."

"Hardly, I suspect."

"And we're keeping other fellows away, maybe. It is a shame!"

Thomas ran his line in rapidly, with nothing on the hook.

"Cap'n Hull," he said, gravely, "I had the biggest kind of a fish then I'm sure; but d'rectly I went to pull him in, sir, he took and let go."

"Yaas," muttered the taciturn skipper, "the biggest fish allers falls back inter the warter."

"I've been thinking a little about this matter, too," said Charlie, after a pause, "and I had about concluded we ought to pair off. But I'll be confounded if I know which is the best! They're both nice girls."

"There isn't much choice," Ned replied. "If they were as different, now, as you and me, I'd take the blonde, of course, aw, and you'd take the brunette. But Hattie Chapman's eyes are blue, and her hair isn't black,

you know, so you can't call her dark, exactly."

"No more than Laura is exactly light. Her hair is brown more than golden, and her eyes are hazel. Hasn't she a lovely complexion, though? By Jove!"

"Better than Hattie's. Yet I don't know but Hattie's features are a little the best."

"They are. Now, honest, Ned, which do you prefer? Say either; I'll take the one you don't want. I haven't any choice."

"Neither have I."

"How shall we settle?"

"Aw, throw for it?"

"Yes. Isn't there a backgammon board forward, in that locker, Thomas?"

The board was found and the dice produced.

"The highest takes which?"

"Say Laura Thurston."

"Very good; throw."

"You first."

"No. Go on."

Charlie threw with about the same amount of excitement he might have exhibited in a turkey raffle.

"Five-three," said he; "now for your luck."

"Six-four! Laura's mine. Satisfied?"

"Perfectly--if you are. If not, I don't mind exchanging."

"Oh, no. I'm satisfied."

Both reclined upon the deck once more with a sigh of relief, and a long silence followed.

"I say," began Charlie, after a time, "it is a comfort to have these little matters arranged without any trouble, eh?"

"Y-e-s."

"Do you know, I think I'll marry mine?"

"I will, if you will."

"Done! It is a bargain."

This "little matter" being arranged, a change gradually took place in the relations of the four. Ned Salsbury began to invite Laura Thurston out driving and bathing somewhat oftener than before, and Hattie Chapman somewhat less often; while Charlie Burnham followed suit with the last-named young lady. As the line of demarcation became fixed, the damsels recognized it, and accepted with gracious readiness the cavaliers that Fate, through the agency of a chance-falling pair of dice, had allotted to them.

The other guests of the house remarked the new position of affairs, and passed whispers about it to the effect that the girls had at last succeeded in getting their fish on hooks instead of in a net. No suitors could have been more devoted than our friends. It seemed as if each knight bestowed upon the chosen one all the attentions he had hitherto given to both; and whether they went boating, sketching, or strolling upon the sands, they were the very picture of a _partie carrée_ of lovers.

Naturally enough, as the young men became more in earnest, with the reticence common to my sex they spoke less frequently and freely on the subject. Once, however, after an unusually pleasant afternoon, Salsbury ventured a few words.

"I say, we're a couple of lucky dogs! Who'd have thought now, aw, that our summer was going to turn out so well? I'm sure I didn't. How do you get along, Charley, boy?"

"Deliciously. Smooth sailing enough. Wasn't it a good idea, though, to pair off? I'm just as happy as a bee in clover. You seem to prosper, too, heh?"

"Couldn't ask anything different. Nothing but devotion, and all that. I'm delighted. I say, when are you going to pop?"

"Oh, I don't know. It is only a matter of form. Sooner the better, I suppose, and have it over."

"I was thinking of next week. What do you say to a quiet picnic down on the rocks, and a walk afterwards? We can separate, you know, and do the

thing up systematically."

"All right. I will, if you will."

"That's another bargain. I notice there isn't much doubt about the results."

"Hardly!"

A close observer might have seen that the gentlemen increased their attentions a little from time to time. The objects of their devotion perceived it, and smiled more and more graciously upon them.

The day set for the picnic arrived duly, and was radiant. It pains me to confess that my heroes were a trifle nervous. Their apparel was more gorgeous and wonderful than ever, and Thomas, who was anxious to be off courting Miss Chapman's lady's-maid, found his masters dreadfully exacting in the matter of hair-dressing. At length, however, the toilet was over, and "Solomon in all his glory" would have been vastly astonished at finding himself "arrayed as one of these."

The boat lay at the pier, receiving large quantities of supplies for the trip, stowed by Thomas, under the supervision of the grim and tarry skipper. When all was ready the young men gingerly escorted their fair companions aboard, the lines were cast off, and the boat glided gently down the bay, leaving Thomas free to fly to the smart presence of Susan Jane and to draw glowing pictures for her of a neat little porter-house in the city, wherein they should hold supreme sway, be happy with each other, and let rooms up-stairs for single gentlemen.

The brisk land breeze swelling the sail, the fluttering of the gay little flag at the gaff, the musical rippling of water under the counter, and the spirited motion of the boat combined, with the bland air and pleasant sunshine, to inspire the party with much vivacity. They had not been many minutes afloat before the guitar-case was opened, and the girls' voices--Laura's soprano and Hattie's contralto--rang melodiously over the waves, mingled with feeble attempt at bass accompaniment from their gorgeous guardians.

Before these vocal exercises wearied, the skipper hauled down his jib, let go his anchor, and brought the craft to just off the rocks; and bringing the yawl alongside, unceremoniously plucked the girls down into it, without giving their cavaliers a chance for the least display of agile courtliness. Rowing ashore, this same tarry person left them huddled upon the beach, with their hopes, their hampers, their emotions, and their baskets, and returned to the vessel to do a little private fishing on his own account till wanted.

The maidens gave vent to their high spirits by chasing each other among the rocks, gathering shells and seaweed for the construction of those ephemeral little ornaments--fair, but frail--in which the sex delights, singing, laughing, quoting poetry, attitudinizing upon the peaks and ledges of the fine old boulders--mossy and weedy and green with the wash of a thousand storms, worn into strange shapes, and stained with the multitudinous dyes of mineral oxidization--and, in brief, behaved themselves with all the charming _abandon_ that so well becomes young girls set free, by the _entourage_ of a holiday ramble, from the buckram and clear-starch of social etiquette.

Meanwhile Ned and Charley smoked the pensive cigar of preparation in a sheltered corner, and gazed out seaward, dreaming and seeing nothing.

Erelong the breeze and the romp gave the young ladies not only a splendid color and sparkling eyes, but excellent appetites also. The baskets and hampers were speedily unpacked, the table-cloth laid on a broad, flat stone, so used by generations of Brant House picnickers, and the party fell to. Laura's beautiful hair, a little disordered, swept her blooming cheek, and cast a pearly shadow upon her neck. Her bright eyes glanced archly out from under her half-raised veil, and there was something inexpressibly _naïve_ in the freedom with which she ate, taking a bird's wing in her fingers, and boldly attacking it with teeth as white and even as can be imagined. Notwithstanding all the mawkish nonsense that has been put forth by sentimentalists concerning feminine eating, I hold that it is one of the nicest things in the world to see a pretty woman enjoying the creature comforts; and Byron himself, had he been one of this picnic party, would have been unable to resist the admiration that filled the souls of Burnham and Salisbury. Hattie Chapman stormed the fortress of boned turkey with a gusto equal to that of Laura, and made highly successful raids upon certain outlying salads and jellies. The young men were not in a very ravenous condition; they were, as I have said, a little nervous, and bent their energies principally to admiring the ladies and coquetting with pickled oysters.

When the repast was over, with much accompanying chat and laughter, Ned glanced significantly at Charley, and proposed to Laura that they should walk up the beach to a place where, he said, there were "some pretty rocks and things, you know." She consented, and they marched off. Hattie also arose, and took her parasol, as if to follow, but Charley remained seated, tracing mysterious diagrams upon the table-cloth with his fork, and looked sublimely unconscious.

"Sha'n't we walk, too?" Hattie asked.

"Oh, why, the fact is," said he, hesitatingly, "I--I sprained my ankle getting out of that confounded boat, so I don't feel much like exercising just now."

The young girl's face expressed concern.

"That is too bad! Why didn't you tell us of it before? Is it painful? I'm so sorry!"

"N-no--it doesn't hurt much. I dare say it will be all right in a minute. And then--I'd just as soon stay here--with you--as to walk anywhere."

This very tenderly, with a little sigh.

Hattie sat down again, and began to talk to this factitious cripple in the pleasant, purring way some damsels have, about the joys of the sea-shore, the happy summer that was, alas! drawing to a close, her own enjoyment of life, and kindred topics, till Charley saw an excellent opportunity to interrupt with some aspirations of his own, which, he averred, must be realized before his life would be considered a satisfactory success.

If you had ever been placed in analogous circumstances, you know, of course, just about the sort of thing that was being said by the two gentlemen at nearly the same moment: Ned, loitering slowly along the sands with Laura on his arm, and Charley, stretched in indolent picturesqueness upon the rocks, with Hattie sitting beside him. If you do not know from experience, ask any candid friend who has been through the form and ceremony of an orthodox proposal.

When the pedestrians returned the two couples looked very hard at each other. All were smiling and complacent, but devoid of any strange or unusual expression. Indeed, the countenance is subject to such severe education, in good society, that one almost always looks smiling and complacent. Demonstration is not fashionable, and a man must preserve the same demeanor over the loss of a wife or a glove-button, over the gift of a heart's whole devotion or a bundle of cigars. Under all these visitations the complacent smile is in favor as the neatest, most serviceable, and convenient form of non-committalism.

The sun was approaching the blue range of misty hills that bounded the mainland swamps by this time; so the skipper was signalled, the dinner paraphernalia gathered up, and the party were soon _en route_ for home once more. When the young ladies were safely in, Ned and Charley met in their room, and each caught the other looking at him stealthily. Both smiled.

"Did I give you time, Charley?" asked Ned; "we came back rather soon."

"Oh, yes; plenty of time."

"Did you--aw, did you pop?"

"Y-yes. Did you?"

"Well--yes."

"And you were--"

"Rejected, by Jove!"

"So was I!"

The day following this disastrous picnic the baggage of Mr. Edwin Salsbury and Mr. Charles Burnham was sent to the depot at Wikhasset Station, and they presented themselves at the hotel-office with a request for their bill. As Jerry Swayne deposited their key upon its hook, he drew forth a small tri-cornered billet from the pigeon-hole beneath, and presented it.

"Left for you this morning, gentlemen."

It was directed to both, and Charley read it over Ned's shoulder. It ran thus:

"DEAR BOYS: The next time you divert yourselves by throwing dice for two young ladies, we pray you not to do so in the presence of a valet who is upon terms of intimacy with the maid of one of them.

"With many sincere thanks for the amusement you have given us--often when you least suspected it--we bid you a lasting adieu, and remain, with the best wishes,

"HATTIE CHAPMAN,
"LAURA THURSTON.

"_Brant House_,
"_Wednesday."_

"It is all the fault of that, aw--that confounded Thomas!" said Ned.

So Thomas was discharged.

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BREAD

by Ellis Parker Butler

They came to Iowa in a prairie schooner with a rounded canvas top and where the canvas was brought together at the rear of the wagon it left a little window above the tailboard. On the floor of the wagon was a heap of hay and an old quilt out of which the matted cotton protruded, and on this Martha and Eben used to sit, looking out of the window. Martha was a little over two years old and Eben was four.

They crossed the Mississippi at Muscatine on the ferry. It was about noon and old Hodges, the crew of the ferry, who was as crooked as the branches of an English oak because the huge branch of an English oak had fallen on him when he was young, took his dinner from his tin pail. He looked up and saw the two eager little faces.

"Want a bite to eat?" he asked, and he peeled apart two thick slices of bread, thickly buttered, and handed them up to the two youngsters. This, a slice of Mrs. Hodges' good wheat bread, was Martha's welcome to Iowa. The butter was as fragrant as a flower and the bread was moist and succulent, delicious to the touch and the taste. Martha ate it all, even to the last crumb of crust, and, although she did not know it, the gift, the acceptance and the eating was a sacrament--the welcome of bountiful Iowa.

As the prairie schooner rolled its slow way inward into the state there were more slices of bread. The father stopped the weary horses at many houses, shacks and dugouts; and always there was a woman to come to the wagon with a slice of bread for Martha, and one for Eben, for that was the Iowa way. Sometimes the bread was buttered, sometimes it was spread with jelly, sometimes it was bread alone. It was all good bread.

There were days at a time, after they reached the new home, when there was nothing to eat but bread, but there was always that. The neighbors did not wait to be asked to lend; they brought flour unasked and Martha's mother kneaded it and set it to rise and baked it. Then the harvests began to come in uninterrupted succession of wealth, and the

dugout became a house, and barns arose, and a school was built, and Martha and Eben went along the dusty, unfenced road, barefooted, happy, well fed, or in winter leaped through the snowdrifts. In their well-filled lunch pail there was always plenty and always bread.

In time Martha taught school, now in one district and now in another; and everywhere, wherever she boarded, there was good wheat bread and plenty of it. She remembered the boarding places by their bread. Some had bread as good as her mother's; some had bread not as good. During her first vacation her mother taught her to make bread. Her very first baking was a success. John Cartwright, coming to the kitchen door just as she was drawing the black bread-pan from the oven on that hot July day, saw her eyes sparkle with triumph as she saw the rich brown loaves.

"Isn't it beautiful? It is my first bread, John," she said, as she stood, flushed and triumphant.

"It smells like mother's," he said, "but she don't seem to get her'n so nice and brown."

"I guess Martha is a natural bread-maker," said her mother proudly. "Some is and some ain't."

Always good bread and plenty of it! That was Iowa. And it was of Martha's bread they partook around the kitchen table the next year--Eben and John, Martha and her father and mother--just before the two young men drove to the county seat to enlist.

"I guess we won't get bread like this in the army," John said, and he was right.

"When I'm chawing this sow-belly and hard tack," Eben wrote, "I wish I had some of that bread of yours, Marth. I guess this war won't last long and the minute it is over you'll see me skedaddling home for some of your bread. Tell ma I'm well and----"

They brought his body home because he was not killed outright but lived almost two weeks in the hospital at St. Louis after he was wounded. Martha scraped the dough from her fingers to go to the door when her father drove up with the precious, lifeless form. That day her bread was not as good as usual.

Martha and John were married the month he came back from the war, and the bread that was eaten at the wedding dinner was Martha's own baking. The bread that was eaten by those who came to prepare her mother for the grave and by those who came, a year later, to lay away her father, was Martha's. Once, twice, three times, four times Martha did a double

baking, to "last over," so that there might be bread in the house while the babies were being born. Every week, except those four weeks, she baked bread.

In succession the small boys and girls of her own began coming to the kitchen door pleading, "Ma, may I have a piece of bread an' butter?" Always they might. There was always plenty of bread; it was Iowa.

In time Martha became something of a fanatic about flour. One kind was the best flour in the world; she would have no other. Once, when John brought back another brand, she sent him back to town with it. Her bread was so well known that the flour dealer in town was wont to say, "This is the kind Mis' Cartwright uses; I guess I can't say no more'n that." Eight times in twenty years she won the blue ribbon at the county fair for her loaves; the twelve other times John swore the judges were prejudiced. "It ain't the flour; that I do know!" Martha would answer.

Presently there were children of her children coming on Sunday to spend the day with the "old folks," and there was always enough bread for all. Sometime in the afternoon the big loaf would be taken out of the discarded tin boiler that served as a bread-box and the children would have a "piece"--huge slices of bread, limber in the hand, spread with brown sugar, or jelly, or honey, or dripping with jam. Then, one Sunday, young John's wife brought a loaf of her own bread to show Martha. They battled pleasantly for two hours over the merits of two brands of flour, comparing the bread, but Martha would no more have given up her own brand than she would have deserted the Methodist Church to become a Mahometan!

Then came a time when John had difficulty in holding his pipe in his mouth because his "pipe tooth" was gone. He no longer ate the crusts of Martha's bread except when he dipped them in his coffee. There was a strong, young girl to do the housework but Martha still made the bread, just such beautiful, richly browned, fragrant bread as she had made in her younger days. There had never been a week without the good bread, for this was Iowa.

One day, as she was kneading the dough, she stopped suddenly and put her hand to her side, under her heart. She had to wait several minutes before she could go on with the kneading. Then she shaped the bread into loaves and put it in the pan and put the pan in the oven. She went out on the porch, where John was sitting, and talked about the weather, and then of a grandson, Horace, who was the first to enlist for the great war that was wracking the world. She mentioned the poor Belgians.

"And us so comfortable here, and all!" she said. "When I think of them not having bread enough to eat----"

"I warrant they never did have bread like yours to eat, ma," said John.

She rocked slowly, happy and proud that her man thought that, and then she went in to take the fresh loaves from the oven. They were crisp and golden brown as always, great, plump, nourishing loaves of good wheat bread. She carried the pan to the table.

"Bertha," she said, "I'll let you put the bread away. I guess I'll go up and lie down awhile; I don't feel right well."

She stopped at the foot of the stairs to tell John she was going up; that she did not feel very well.

"If I don't come down to supper," she said, "you can have Bertha cut a loaf of the fresh bread, but you'd better not eat too much of it, John; it don't always agree with you. There's plenty of the other loaf left."

She did not come down again, not Martha herself. She did not mourn because she could not come down again. She had lived her life and it had been a good life, happy, well-nourished, satisfying as her own bread had been. And so, when they came back from leaving Martha beside the brother who had died so many years before, the last loaf of her last baking was cut and eaten around the kitchen table--the youngsters biting eagerly into the thick slices, the elders tasting with thoughts not on the bread at all, and old John crumbling the bread in his fingers and thinking of long past years.

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Prairie Gold*, by Various



LOVE, FAITH AND HOPE

by Leonid Andreyev

He loved.

According to his passport, he was called Max Z. But as it was stated in the same passport that he had no special peculiarities about his features, I prefer to call him Mr. N+1. He represented a long line of young men who possess wavy, dishevelled locks, straight, bold, and open looks, well-formed and strong bodies, and very large and powerful hearts.

All these youths have loved and perpetuated their love. Some of them have succeeded in engraving it on the tablets of history, like Henry IV; others, like Petrarch, have made literary preserves of it; some have availed themselves for that purpose of the newspapers, wherein the happenings of the day are recorded, and where they figured among those who had strangled themselves, shot themselves, or who had been shot by others; still others, the happiest and most modest of all, perpetuated their love by entering it in the birth records--by creating posterity.

The love of N+1 was as strong as death, as a certain writer put it; as strong as life, he thought.

Max was firmly convinced that he was the first to have discovered the method of loving so intensely, so unrestrainedly, so passionately, and he regarded with contempt all who had loved before him. Still more, he was convinced that even after him no one would love as he did, and he felt sorry that with his death the secret of true love would be lost to mankind. But, being a modest young man, he attributed part of his achievement to her--to his beloved. Not that she was perfection itself, but she came very close to it, as close as an ideal can come to reality.

There were prettier women than she, there were wiser women, but was there ever a better woman? Did there ever exist a woman on whose face was so clearly and distinctly written that she alone was worthy of love--of infinite, pure, and devoted love? Max knew that there never were, and that there never would be such women. In this respect, he had no special peculiarities, just as Adam did not have them, just as you, my reader, do not have them. Beginning with Grandmother Eve and ending with the woman upon whom your eyes were directed--before you read these lines--the same inscription is to be clearly and distinctly read on the face of every woman at a certain time. The difference is only in the quality of the ink.

A very nasty day set in--it was Monday or Tuesday--when Max noticed with a feeling of great terror that the inscription upon the dear face was fading. Max rubbed his eyes, looked first from a distance, then from all sides; but the fact was undeniable--the inscription was fading. Soon the last letter also disappeared--the face was white like the recently whitewashed wall of a new house. But he was convinced that the inscription had disappeared not of itself, but that some one had wiped it off. Who?

Max went to his friend, John N. He knew and he felt sure that such a true, disinterested, and honest friend there never was and never would be. And in this respect, too, as you see, Max had no special peculiarities. He went to his friend for the purpose of taking his advice concerning the mysterious disappearance of the inscription, and found John N. exactly at the moment when he was wiping away that inscription by his kisses. It was then that the records of the local occurrences were enriched by another unfortunate incident, entitled "An Attempt at Suicide."

.....

It is said that death always comes in due time. Evidently, that time had not yet arrived for Max, for he remained alive--that is, he ate, drank, walked, borrowed money and did not return it, and altogether he showed by a series of psycho-physiological acts that he was a living being, possessing a stomach, a will, and a mind--but his soul was dead, or, to be more exact, it was absorbed in lethargic sleep. The sound of human speech reached his ears, his eyes saw tears and laughter, but all that did not stir a single echo, a single emotion in his soul. I do not know what space of time had elapsed. It may have been one year, and it may have been ten years, for the length of such intermissions in life depends on how quickly the actor succeeds in changing his costume.

One beautiful day--it was Wednesday or Thursday--Max awakened completely. A careful and guarded liquidation of his spiritual property made it clear that a fair piece of Max's soul, the part which contained his love for woman and for his friends, was dead, like a paralysis-stricken hand or foot. But what remained was, nevertheless, enough for life. That was love for and faith in mankind. Then Max, having renounced personal happiness, started to work for the happiness of others.

That was a new phase--he believed.

All the evil that is tormenting the world seemed to him to be concentrated in a "red flower," in one red flower. It was but necessary to tear it down, and the incessant, heart-rending cries and moans which rise to the indifferent sky from all points of the earth, like its natural breathing, would be silenced. The evil of the world, he believed, lay in the evil will and in the madness of the people. They themselves were to blame for being unhappy, and they could be happy if they wished. This seemed so clear and simple that Max was dumfounded in his amazement at human stupidity. Humanity reminded him of a crowd huddled together in a spacious temple and panic-stricken at the cry of "Fire!"

Instead of passing calmly through the wide doors and saving themselves, the maddened people, with the cruelty of frenzied beasts, cry and roar, crush one another and perish--not from the fire (for it is only imaginary), but from their own madness. It is enough sometimes when one sensible, firm word is uttered to this crowd--the crowd calms down and imminent death is thus averted. Let, then, a hundred calm, rational voices be raised to mankind, showing them where to escape and where the danger lies--and heaven will be established on earth, if not immediately, then at least within a very brief time.

Max began to utter his word of wisdom. How he uttered it you will learn later. The name of Max was mentioned in the newspapers, shouted in the market places, blessed and cursed; whole books were written on what Max N+1 had done, what he was doing, and what he intended to do. He appeared here and there and everywhere. He was seen standing at the head of the crowd, commanding it; he was seen in chains and under the knife of the guillotine. In this respect Max did not have any special peculiarities, either. A preacher of humility and peace, a stern bearer of fire and sword, he was the same Max--Max the believer. But while he was doing all this, time kept passing on. His nerves were shattered; his wavy locks became thin and his head began to look like that of Elijah the Prophet; here and there he felt a piercing pain....

The earth continued to turn light-mindedly around the sun, now coming nearer to it, now retreating coquettishly, and giving the impression that it fixed all its attention upon its household friend, the moon; the days were replaced by other days, and the dark nights by other dark nights, with such pedantic German punctuality and correctness that all the artistic natures were compelled to move over to the far north by degrees, where the devil himself would break his head endeavouring to distinguish between day and night--when suddenly something happened to Max.

Somehow it happened that Max became misunderstood. He had calmed the crowd by his words of wisdom many a time before and had saved them from mutual destruction but now he was not understood. They thought that it was he who had shouted "Fire!" With all the eloquence of which he was capable he assured them that he was exerting all his efforts for their sake alone; that he himself needed absolutely nothing, for he was alone, childless; that he was ready to forget the sad misunderstanding and serve them again with faith and truth--but all in vain. They would not trust him. And in this respect Max did not have any special peculiarities, either. The sad incident ended for Max in a new intermission.

.....

Max was alive, as was positively established by medical experts, who had

made a series of simple tests. Thus, when they pricked a needle into his foot, he shook his foot and tried to remove the needle. When they put food before him, he ate it, but he did not walk and did not ask for any loans, which clearly testified to the complete decline of his energy. His soul was dead--as much as the soul can be dead while the body is alive. To Max all that he had loved and believed in was dead. Impenetrable gloom wrapped his soul. There were neither feelings in it, nor desires, nor thoughts. And there was not a more unhappy man in the world than Max, if he was a man at all.

But he was a man.

According to the calendar, it was Friday or Saturday, when Max awakened as from a prolonged sleep. With the pleasant sensation of an owner to whom his property has been restored which had wrongly been taken from him, Max realised that he was once more in possession of all his five senses.

His sight reported to him that he was all alone, in a place which might in justice be called either a room or a chimney. Each wall of the room was about a metre and a half wide and about ten metres high. The walls were straight, white, smooth, with no openings, except one through which food was brought to Max. An electric lamp was burning brightly on the ceiling. It was burning all the time, so that Max did not know now what darkness was. There was no furniture in the room, and Max had to lie on the stone floor. He lay curled together, as the narrowness of the room did not permit him to stretch himself.

His sense of hearing reported to him that until the day of his death he would not leave this room.... Having reported this, his hearing sank into inactivity, for not the slightest sound came from without, except the sounds which Max himself produced, tossing about, or shouting until he was hoarse, until he lost his voice.

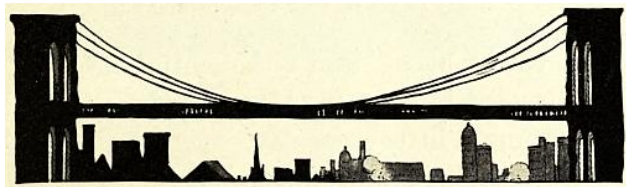
Max looked into himself. In contrast to the outward light which never went out he saw within himself impenetrable, heavy, and motionless darkness. In that darkness his love and faith were buried.

Max did not know whether time was moving or whether it stood motionless. The same even, white light poured down on him--the same silence and quiet. Only by the beating of his heart Max could judge that Chronos had not left his chariot. His body was aching ever more from the unnatural position in which it lay, and the constant light and silence were growing ever more tormenting. How happy are they for whom night exists, near whom people are shouting, making noise, beating drums; who may sit on a chair, with their feet hanging down, or lie with their feet outstretched, placing the head in a corner and covering it with the hands in order to create the illusion of darkness.

Max made an effort to recall and to picture to himself what there is in life; human faces, voices, the stars.... He knew that his eyes would never in life see that again. He knew it, and yet he lived. He could have destroyed himself, for there is no position in which a man can not do that, but instead Max worried about his health, trying to eat, although he had no appetite, solving mathematical problems to occupy his mind so as not to lose his reason. He struggled against death as if it were not his deliverer, but his enemy; and as if life were to him not the worst of infernal tortures--but love, faith, and happiness. Gloom in the Past, the grave in the Future, and infernal tortures in the Present--and yet he lived. Tell me, John N., where did he get the strength for that?

He hoped.

from Project Gutenberg's *The Crushed Flower and Other Stories*, by Leonid Andreyev



B-12's MOON GLOW

by Charles A. Stearns

Among the metal-persons of Phobos, robot B-12 held a special niche. He might not have been stronger, larger, faster than some ... but he could be devious ... and more important, he was that junkyard planetoid's only moonshiner.

AM B-12, a metal person. If you read Day and the other progressive journals you will know that in some quarters of the galaxy there is considerable prejudice directed against us. It is ever so with minority races, and I do not complain. I merely make this statement so that you will understand about the alarm clock.

An alarm clock is a simple mechanism used by the Builders to shock themselves into consciousness after the periodic comas to which they are subject. It is obsolescent, but still used in such out of the way places as Phobos.

My own contact with one of these devices came about in the following manner:

I had come into Argon City under cover of darkness, which is the only sensible thing to do, in my profession, and I was stealing through the back alleyways as silently as my rusty joints would allow. I was less than three blocks from Benny's Place, and still undetected, when I passed the window. It was a large, cheerful oblong of light, so quite naturally I stopped to investigate, being slightly phototropic, by virtue of the selenium grids in my rectifier cells. I went over and looked in, unobtrusively resting my grapples on the outer ledge.

There was a Builder inside such as I had not seen since I came to Phobos half a century ago, and yet I recognized the subspecies at once, for they are common on Earth. It was a she.

It was in the process of removing certain outer sheaths, and I noted that, while quite symmetrical, bilaterally, it was otherwise oddly formed, being disproportionately large and lumpy in the anterior ventral region.

I had watched for some two or three minutes, entirely forgetting my own safety, when then she saw me. Its eyes widened and it snatched up the alarm clock which was, as I have hinted, near at hand.

“Get out of here, you nosey old tin can!” it screamed, and threw the clock, which caromed off my headpiece, damaging one earphone. I ran.

If you still do not see what I mean about racial prejudice, you will, when you hear what happened later.

I continued on until I came to Benny’s Place, entering through the back door. Benny met me there, and quickly shushed me into a side room. His fluorescent eyes were glowing with excitement.

Benny’s real name is BNE-96, and when on Earth he had been only a Servitor, not a General Purpose like myself.

But perhaps I should explain.

We metal people are the children of the Builders of Earth, and later of Mars and Venus. We were not born of two parents, as they are. That is a function far too complex to explain here; in fact I do not even understand it myself. No, we were born of the hands and intellects of the greatest of their scientists, and for this reason it might be natural to suppose that we, and not they, would be considered a superior race. It is not so.

Many of us were fashioned in those days, a metal person for every kind of task that they could devise, and some, like myself, who could do almost anything. We were contented enough, for the greater part, but the scientists kept creating, always striving to better their former efforts.

And one day the situation which the Builders had always regarded as inevitable, but we, somehow, had supposed would never come, was upon us. The first generation of the metal people—more than fifty thousand of us—were obsolete. The things that we had been designed to do, the new ones, with their crystalline brains, fresh, untarnished, accomplished better.

We were banished to Phobos, dreary, lifeless moon of Mars. It had long been a sort of interplanetary junkyard; now it became a graveyard.

PON the barren face of this little world there was no life except for the handful of hardy Martian and Terran prospectors who searched for minerals. Later on, a few rude mining communities sprang up under plastic airdromes, but never came to much. Argon City was such a place.

I wonder if you can comprehend the loneliness, the hollow futility of our plight. Fifty thousand skilled workmen with nothing to do. Some of the less adaptable gave up, prostrating themselves upon the bare rocks until their joints froze from lack of use, and their works corroded. Others served the miners and prospectors, but their needs were all too few.

The overwhelming majority of us were still idle, and somehow we learned the secret of racial existence at last. We learned to serve each other.

This was not an easy lesson to learn. In the first place there must be motivation involved in racial preservation. Yet we derived no pleasure out of the things that make the Builders wish to continue to live. We did not sleep; we did not eat, and we were not able to reproduce ourselves. (And, besides, this latter, as I have indicated, would have been pointless with us.)

There was, however, one other pleasure of the Builders that intrigued us. It can best be described as a stimulation produced by drenching their insides with alcoholic compounds, and is a universal pastime among the males and many of the shes.

One of us—R-47, I think it was (rest him)—tried it one day. He pried open the top of his helmet and pouted an entire bottle of the fluid down his mechanism.

Poor R-47. He caught fire and blazed up in a glorious blue flame that we could not extinguish in time. He was beyond repair, and we were forced to scrap him.

But his was not a sacrifice in vain. He had established an idea in our ennui-bursting minds. An idea which led to the discovery of Moon Glow. My discovery, I should say, for I was the first.

Naturally, I cannot divulge my secret formula for Moon Glow. There are many kinds of Moon Glow these days, but there is still only one B-12 Moon Glow.

Suffice it to say that it is a high octane preparation, only a drop of which—but you know the effects of Moon Glow, of course.

How the merest thimbleful, when judiciously poured into one's power pack, gives new life and the most deliriously happy freedom of movement imaginable. One possesses soaring spirits and super-strength. Old, rusted joints move freely once more, one's transistors glow brightly, and the currents of the body race about with the minutest resistance. Moon Glow is like being born again.

The sale of it has been illegal for several years, for no reason that I can think of except that the Builders, who make the laws, can not bear to see metal people have fun.

Of course, a part of the blame rests on such individuals as X-101, who, when lubricated with Moon Glow, insists upon dancing around on large, cast-iron feet to the hazard of all toes in his vicinity. He is thin and long jointed, and he goes "creak, creak," in a weird, sing-song fashion as he dances. It is a shameful, ludicrous sight.

Then there was DC-5, who tore down the 300 feet long equipment hangar of the Builders one night. He had over-indulged.

DO not feel responsible for these things. If I had not sold them the Moon Glow, someone else would have done so. Besides, I am only a wholesaler. Benny buys everything that I am able to produce in my little laboratory hidden out in the Dumps.

Just now, by Benny's attitude, I knew that something was very wrong. "What is the matter?" I said. "Is it the revenue agents?"

"I do not know," said BNE-96 in that curious, flat voice of his that is incapable of inflection. "I do not know, but there are visitors of importance from Earth. It could mean anything, but I have a premonition of disaster. Jon tipped me off."

He meant Jon Rogeson, of course, who was the peace officer here in Argon City, and the only one of the Builders I had ever met who did not look down upon a metal person. When sober he was a clever person who always looked out for our interests here.

"What are they like?" I asked in some fear, for I had six vials of Moon Glow with me at the moment.

"I have not seen them, but there is one who is high in the government, and his wife. There are half a dozen others of the Builder race, and one of the new type metal persons."

I had met the she who must have been the wife. "They hate us," I said. "We can expect only evil from these persons."

"You may be right. If you have any merchandise with you, I will take it, but do not risk bringing more here until they have gone."

I produced the vials of Moon Glow, and he paid me in Phobos credits, which are good for a specified number of refuelings at the Central fueling station.

Benny put the vials away and he went into the bar. There was the usual jostling crowd of hard-bitten Earth miners, and of the metal people who come to lose their loneliness. I recognized many, though I spend very little time in these places, preferring solitary pursuits, such as the distillation of Moon Glow, and improving my mind by study and contemplation out in the barrens.

Jon Rogeson and I saw each other at the same time, and I did not like the expression in his eye as he crooked a finger at me. I went over to his table. He was pleasant looking, as Builders go, with blue eyes less dull than most, and a brown, unruly topknot of hair such as is universally affected by them.

"Sit down," he invited, revealing his white incisors in greeting.

I never sit, but this time I did so, to be polite. I was wary; ready for anything. I knew that there was something unpleasant in the air. I wondered if he had seen me passing the Moon Glow to Benny somehow. Perhaps he had barrier-penetrating vision, like the Z group of metal people ... but I had never heard of a Builder like that. I knew that he had long suspected that I made Moon Glow.

"What do you want?" I asked cautiously.

"Come on now," he said, "loosen up! Limber those stainless steel hinges of yours and be friendly."

That made me feel good. Actually, I am somewhat pitted with rust, but he never seems to notice, for he is like that. I felt young, as if I had partaken of my own product.

"The fact is, B-12," he said, "I want you to do me a favor, old pal."

"And what is that?"

"Perhaps you have heard that there is some big brass from Earth visiting Phobos this week."

"I have heard nothing," I said. It is often helpful to appear ignorant when questioned by the Builders, for they believe us to be incapable of misrepresenting the truth. The fact is, though it is an acquired trait, and not built into us, we General Purposes can lie as well as anyone.

"Well, there is. A Federation Senator, no less. Simon F. Langley. It's my job to keep them entertained; that's where you come in."

I was mystified. I had never heard of this Langley, but I know what entertainment is. I had a mental image of myself singing or dancing before the Senator's party. But I can not sing very well, for three of my voice reeds are broken and have never been replaced, and lateral motion, for me, is almost impossible these days. "I do not know what you mean," I said. "There is J-66. He was once an Entertainment—"

"No, no!" he interrupted, "you don't get it. What the Senator wants is a guide. They're making a survey of the Dumps, though I'll be damned if I can find out why. And you know the Dumps better than any metal person—or human—on Phobos."

So that was it. I felt a vague dread, a premonition of disaster. I had such feelings before, and usually with reason. This too, was an acquired sensibility, I am sure. For many years I have studied the Builders, and there is much to be learned of their mobile faces and their eyes. In Jon's eyes, however, I read no trickery—nothing.

Yet, I say, I had the sensation of evil. It was just for a moment; no longer.

I said I would think it over.

ENATOR LANGLEY was distinguished. Jon said so. And yet he was clumsily round, and he rattled incessantly of things into which I could interpret no meaning. The she who was his wife was much younger, and sullen, and unpleasantly I sensed great rapport between her and Jon Rogeson from the very first.

There were several other humans in the group—I will not call them Builders, for I did not hold them to be, in any way, superior to my own people. They all wore spectacles, and they gravitated about the round body of the Senator like minor moons, and I could tell that they were some kind of servitors. I will not describe them further.

MS-33 I will describe. I felt an unconscionable hatred for him at once. I can not say why, except that he hung about his master obsequiously, power pack smoothly purring, and he was slim limbed, nickel-plated, and wore, I thought, a smug expression on his viziplate. He represented the new order; the ones who had displaced us on Earth. He knew too much, and showed it at every opportunity.

We did not go far that first morning. The half-track was driven to the edge of the Dumps. Within the Dumps one walks—or does not go. Phobos is an airless world, and yet so small that rockets are impractical. The terrain is broken and littered with the refuse of half a dozen worlds, but the Dumps themselves—that is different.

Imagine, if you can, an endless vista of death, a sea of rusting corpses of space ships, and worn-out mining machinery, and of those of my race whose power packs burned out, or who simply gave up, retiring into this endless, corroding limbo of the barrens. A more sombre sight was never seen. But this fat ghoul, Langley, sickened me. This shame of the Builder race, this atavism—this beast—rubbed his fat, impractical hands together with an ungod-like glee. “Excellent,” he said. “Far, far better, in fact, than I had hoped.” He did not elucidate.

I looked at Jon Rogeson. He shook his head slowly.

“You there—robot!” said Langley, looking at me. “How far across this place?” The word was like a blow. I could not answer.

MS-33, glistening in the dying light of Mars, strode over to me, clanking heavily up on the black rocks. He seized me with his grapples and shook me until my wiring was in danger of shorting out. “Speak up when you are spoken to, archaic mechanism!” he grated.

I would have struck out at him, but what use except to warp my own aging limbs.

Jon Rogeson came to my rescue. “On Phobos,” he explained to Langley, “we don’t use that word ‘robot.’ These folk have been free a long time. They’ve quite a culture of their own nowadays, and they like to be called ‘metal people.’ As a return courtesy, they refer to us humans as ‘builders.’ Just a custom, Senator, but if you want to get along with them—”

“Can they vote?” said Langley, grinning at his own sour humor.

“Nonsense,” said MS-33. “I am a robot, and proud of it. This rusty piece has no call to put on airs.”

“Release him,” Langley said. “Droll fellows, these discarded robots. Really nothing but mechanical dolls, you know, but I think the old scientists made a mistake, giving them such human appearance, and such obstinate traits.”

Oh, it was true enough, from his point of view. We had been mechanical dolls at first, I suppose, but fifty years can change one. All I know is this: we are people; we think and feel, and are happy and sad, and quite often we are bored stiff with this dreary moon of Phobos.

It seared me. My selenium cells throbbed white hot within the shell of my frame, and I made up my mind that I would learn more about the mission of this Langley, and I would get even with MS-33 even if they had me dismantled for it.

Of the rest of that week I recall few pleasant moments. We went out every day, and the quick-eyed servants of Langley measured the areas with their instruments, and exchanged significant looks from behind their spectacles, smug in their thin air helmets. It was all very mysterious. And disturbing.

But I could discover nothing about their mission. And when I questioned MS-33, he would look important and say nothing. Somehow it seemed vital that I find out what was going on before it was too late.

On the third day there was a strange occurrence. My friend, Jon Rogeson had been taking pictures of the Dumps. Langley and his wife had withdrawn to one side and were talking in low tones to one another. Quite thoughtlessly Jon turned the lens on them and clicked the shutter.

Langley became rust-red throughout the vast expanse of his neck and face. “Here!” he said, “what are you doing?”

“Nothing,” said Jon.

“You took a picture of me,” snarled Langley. “Give me the plate at once.”

Jon Rogeson got a bit red himself. He was not used to being ordered around. “I’ll be damned if I will,” he said.

Langley growled something I couldn’t understand, and turned his back on us. The she who was called his wife looked startled and worried. Her eyes were beseeching as she looked at Jon. A message there, but I could not read it. Jon looked away.

Langley started walking back to the half-track alone. He turned once and there was evil in his gaze as he looked at Jon. "You will lose your job for this impertinence," he said with quiet savagery, and added, enigmatically, "not that there will be a job after this week anyway."

Builders may appear to act without reason, but there is always a motivation somewhere in their complex brains, if one can only find it, either in the seat of reason, or in the labyrinthine inhibitions from their childhood. I knew this, because I had studied them, and now there were certain notions that came into my brain which, even if I could not prove them, were no less interesting for that.

HE time had come to act. I could scarcely wait for darkness to come. There were things in my brain that appalled me, but I was now certain that I had been right. Something was about to happen to Phobos, to all of us here—I knew not what, but I must prevent it somehow.

I kept in the shadows of the shabby buildings of Argon City, and I found the window without effort. The place where I had spied upon the wife of Langley to my sorrow the other night. There was no one there; there was darkness within, but that did not deter me.

Within the airdrome which covers Argon City the buildings are loosely constructed, even as they are on Earth. I had no trouble, therefore, opening the window. I swung a leg up and was presently within the darkened room. I found the door I sought and entered cautiously. In this adjacent compartment I made a thorough search but I did not find what I primarily sought—namely the elusive reason for Langley's visit to Phobos. It was in a metallic overnight bag that I did find something else which made my power pack hum so loudly that I was afraid of being heard. The thing which explained the strangeness of the pompous Senator's attitude today—which explained, in short, many things, and caused my brain to race with new ideas.

I put the thing in my chest container, and left as stealthily as I had come. There had been progress, but since I had not found what I hoped to find, I must now try my alternate plan.

Two hours later I found the one I sought, and made sure that I was seen by him. Then I left Argon City by the South lock, furtively, as a thief, always glancing over my shoulder, and when I made certain that I was being followed, I went swiftly, and it was not long before I was clambering over the first heaps of debris at the edge of the Dumps.

Once I thought I heard footsteps behind me, but when I looked back there was no one in sight. Just the tiny disk of Deimos peering over the sharp peak of the nearest ridge, the black velvet sky outlining the curvature of this airless moon.

Presently I was in sight of home, the time-eaten hull of an ancient star freighter resting near the top of a heap of junked equipment from some old strip mining operation. It would never rise again, but its shell remained strong enough to shelter my distillery and scant furnishings from any chance meteorite that might fall.

I greeted it with the usual warmth of feeling which one has for the safe and the familiar. I stumbled over tin fuel cans, wires and other tangled metal in my haste to get there.

It was just as I had left it. The heating element under the network of coils and pressure chambers still glowed with white heat, and the Moon Glow was dripping with musical sound into the retort.

I felt good. No one ever bothered me here. This was my fortress, with all that I cared for inside. My tools, my work, my micro-library. And yet I had deliberately—

Something—a heavy foot—clanked upon the first step of the manport through which I had entered. I turned quickly. The form shimmered in the pale Deimoslight that silhouetted it.

MS-33.

He had followed me here.

"What do you want?" I said. "What are you doing here?"

"A simple question," said MS-33. "Tonight you looked very suspicious when you left Argon City. I saw you and followed you here. You may as well know that I have never trusted you. All the old ones were unreliable. That is why you were replaced."

He came in, boldly, without being invited, and looked around. I detected a sneer in his voice as he said, "So this is where you hide."

"I do not hide. I live here, it is true."

"A robot does not live. A robot exists. We newer models do not require shelter like an animal. We are rust-proof and invulnerable." He strode over to my micro-library, several racks of carefully arranged spools, and fingered them irreverently. "What is this?"

"My library."

"So! Our memories are built into us. We have no need to refresh them."

"So is mine," I said. "But I would learn more than I know." I was stalling for time, waiting until he made the right opening.

"Nonsense," he said. "I know why you stay out here in the Dumps, masterless. I have heard of the forbidden drug that is sold in the mining camps such as Argon City. Is this the mechanism?" He pointed at the still.

Now was the time. I mustered all my cunning, but I could not speak. Not yet.

"Never mind," he said. "I can see that it is. I shall report you, of course. It will give me great pleasure to see you dismantled. Not that it really matters, of course—now."

There it was again. The same frightening allusion that Langley had made today. I must succeed! I knew that MS-33, for all his brilliance, and newness, and vaunted superiority, was only a Secretarial. For the age of specialism was upon Earth, and General Purpose models were no longer made. That was why we were different here on Phobos. It was why we had survived. The old ones had given us something special which the new metal people did not have. Moreover, MS-33 had his weakness. He was larger, stronger, faster than me, but I doubted that he could be devious.

"You are right," I said, pretending resignation. "This is my distillery. It is where I make the fluid which is called Moon Glow by the metal people of Phobos. Doubtless you are interested in learning how it works."

"Not even remotely interested," he said. "I am interested only in taking you back and turning you over to the authorities."

"It works much like the conventional distilling plants of Earth," I said, "except that the basic ingredient, a silicon compound, is irradiated as it passes through zirconium tubes to the heating pile, where it is activated and broken down into the droplets of the elixir called Moon Glow. You see the golden drops falling there."

"It has the excellent flavor of fine petroleum, as I make it. Perhaps you'd care to taste it. Then you could understand that it is not really bad at all. Perhaps you could persuade yourself to be more lenient with me."

"Certainly not," said MS-33.

"Perhaps you are right," I said after a moment of reflection. I took a syringe, drew up several drops of the stuff and squirted it into my carapace, where it would do the most good. I felt much better.

"Yes," I continued, "certainly you are quite correct, now that I think of it. You newer models would never bear it. You weren't built to stand such things. Nor, for that matter, could you comprehend the exquisite joys that are derived from Moon Glow. Not only would you derive no pleasure from it, but it would corrode your parts, I imagine, until you could scarcely crawl back to your master for repairs." I helped myself to another liberal portion.

"That is the silliest thing I've ever heard," he said.

"What?"

"I said, it's silly. We are constructed to withstand a hundred times greater stress, and twice as many chemical actions as you were. Nothing could hurt us. Besides, it looks harmless enough. I doubt that it is hardly anything at all."

"For me it is not," I admitted. "But you—"

"Give me the syringe, fool!"

"I dare not."

"Give it here!"

I allowed him to wrest it from my grasp. In any case I could not have prevented him. He shoved me backwards against the rusty bulkhead with a clang. He pushed the nozzle of the syringe down into the retort and withdrew it filled with Moon Glow. He opened an inspection plate in his ventral region and squirted himself generously.

It was quite a dose. He waited for a moment. "I feel nothing," he said finally. "I do not believe it is anything more than common lubricating oil." He was silent for another moment. "There is an ease of movement," he said.

"No paralysis?" I asked.

"Paral—? You stupid, rusty old robot!" He helped himself to another syringe of Moon Glow. The stuff brought twenty credits an ounce, but I did not begrudge it him.

He flexed his superbly articulated joints in three directions, and I could hear his power unit building up within him to a whining pitch. He took a shuffling sidestep, and then another, gazing down at his feet, with arms akimbo.

"The light gravity here is superb, superb, superb, superb, superb," he said, skipping a bit.

"Isn't it?" I said.

"Almost negligible," he said.

"True."

"You have been very kind to me," MS-33 said. "Extremely, extraordinarily, incomparably, incalculably kind." He used up all the adjectives in his memory pack. "I wonder if you would mind awfully much if—"

"Not at all," I said. "Help yourself. By the way, friend, would you mind telling me what your real mission of your party is here on Phobos. The Senator forgot to say."

"Secret," he said. "Horribly top secret. As a dutiful subject—I mean servant—of Earth, I could not, of course, divulge it to anyone. If I could—" his neon eyes glistened, "if I could, you would, of course, be the first to know. The very first." He threw one nickel-plated arm about my shoulder.

"I see," I said, "and just what is it that you are not allowed to tell me?"

"Why, that we are making a preliminary survey here on Phobos, of course, to determine whether or not it is worthwhile to send salvage for scrap. Earth is short of metals, and it depends upon what the old ma—the master says in his report."

"You mean they'll take all the derelict spaceships, such as this one, and all the abandoned equipment?"

"And the r-robots," MS-33 said, "They're metal too, you know."

"They're going to take the dismantled robots?"

MS-33 made a sweeping gesture. "They're going to take all the r-robots, dismantled or not. They're not good for anything anyway. The bill is up before the Federation Congress right now. And it will pass if my master, Langley says so." He patted my helmet, consolingly, his grapples clanking. "If you were worth a damn, you know—" he concluded sorrowfully.

"That's murder," I said. And I meant it. Man's inhumanity to metal people, I thought. Yes—to man, even if we were made of metal.

"How's that?" said MS-33 foggily.

"Have another drop of Moon Glow," I said. "I've got to get back to Argon City."

MADE it back to Benny's place without incident. I had never moved so swiftly. I sent Benny out to find Jon Rogeson, and presently he brought him back.

I told Rogeson what MS-33 had said, watching his reaction carefully. I could not forget that though he had been our friend, he was still one of the Builders, a human who thought as humans.

"You comprehend," I said grimly, "that one word of this will bring an uprising of fifty-thousand metal people which can be put down only at much expense and with great destruction. We are free people.

The Builders exiled us here, and therefore lost their claim to us. We have as much right to life as anyone, and we do not wish to be melted up and made into printing presses and space ships and the like."

"The damn fools," Jon said softly. "Listen, B-12, you've got to believe me. I didn't know a thing about this, though I've suspected something was up. I'm on your side, but what are we going to do? Maybe they'll listen to reason. Vera—"

"That is the name of the she? No, they will not listen to reason. They hate us." I recalled with bitterness the episode of alarm clock. "There is a chance, however. I have not been idle this night. If you will go get Langley and meet me in the back room here at Benny's, we will talk."

"But he'll be asleep."

"Awaken him," I said. "Get him here. Your own job is at stake as well, remember."

"I'll get him," Jon said grimly. "Wait here."

I went over to the bar where Benny was serving the miners. Benny had always been my friend. Jon was my friend, too, but he was a Builder. I wanted one of my own people to know what was going on, just in case something happened to me.

We were talking there, in low tones, when I saw MS-33. He came in through the front door, and there was purposefulness in his stride that had not been there when I left him back at the old hulk. The effects of the Moon Glow had worn off much quicker than I had expected. He had come for vengeance. He would tell about my distillery, and that would be the end of me. There was only one thing to do and I must do it fast.

"Quick," I ordered Benny. "Douse the lights." He complied. The place was plunged into darkness. I knew that it was darkness and yet, you comprehend, I still sensed everything in the place, for I had the special visual sensory system bequeathed only to the General Purposes of a bygone age. I could see, but hardly anyone else could. I worked swiftly, and I got what I was after in a very short time. I ducked out of the front door with it and threw it in a silvery arc as far as I could hurl it. It was an intricate little thing which could not, I am sure, have been duplicated on the entire moon of Phobos.

When I returned, someone had put the lights back on, but it didn't matter now. MS-33 was sitting at one of the tables, staring fixedly at me. He said nothing. Benny was motioning for me to come into the back room. I went to him.

Jon Rogeson and Langley were there. Langley looked irritated. He was mumbling strangled curses and rubbing his eyes.

Rogeson laughed. "You may be interested in knowing, B-12, that I had to arrest him to get him here. This had better be good."

"It is all bad," I said, "very bad—but necessary." I turned to Langley. "It is said that your present survey is being made with the purpose of condemning all of Phobos, the dead and the living alike, to the blast furnaces and the metal shops of Earth. Is this true?"

"Why you impudent, miserable piece of tin! What if I am making a scrap survey? What are you going to do about it. You're nothing but a ro—"

"So it is true! But you will tell the salvage ships not to come. It is yours to decide, and you will decide that we are not worth bothering with here on Phobos. You will save us."

"I?" blustered Langley.

"You will." I took the thing out of my breastplate container and showed it to him. He grew pale.

Jon said, "Well, I'll be damned!"

It was a picture of Langley and another. I gave it to Jon. "His wife," I said. "His real wife. I am sure of it, for you will note the inscription on the bottom."

"Then Vera—?"

"Is not his wife. You wonder that he was camera shy?"

"Housebreaker!" roared Langley. "It's a plot; a dirty, reactionary plot!"

"It is what is called blackmail," I said. I turned to Jon. "I am correct about this?"

"You are." Jon said.

"You are instructed to leave Phobos," I said to Langley, "and you will allow my friend here to keep his job as peace officer, for without it he would be lost. I have observed that in these things the Builders are hardly more adaptable than their children, the metal people. You will do all this, and in return, we will not send the picture that Jon took today to your wife, nor otherwise inform her of your transgression. For I am told that this is a transgression."

"It is indeed," agreed Jon gravely. "Right, Langley?"

"All right," Langley snarled. "You win. And the sooner I get out of this hole the better." He got up to go, squeezing his fat form through the door into the bar, past the gaping miners and the metal people, heedless of the metal people. We watched him go with some satisfaction.

"It is no business of mine," I said to Jon, "but I have seen you look with longing upon the she that was not Langley's wife. Since she does not belong to him, there is nothing to prevent you from having her. Should not that make you happy?"

"Are you kidding?" he snarled.

Which proves that I have still much to learn about his race.

Out front, Langley spied his metal servant, MS-33, just as he was going out the door. He turned to him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked suspiciously.

MS-33 made no answer. He stared malevolently at the bar, ignoring Langley.

"Come on here, damn you!" Langley said. MS-33 said nothing. Langley went over to him and roared foul things into his earphones that would corrode one's soul, if one had one. I shall never forget that moment. The screaming, red-faced Langley, the laughing miners.

But he got no reply from MS-33. Not then or ever. And this was scarcely strange, for I had removed his fuse.

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THE WEDDING JEST

By James Branch Cabell

I. Concerning Several Compacts

It is a tale which they narrate in Poictesme, telling how love began between Florian de Puyange and Adelaide de la Forêt. They tell also how young Florian had earlier fancied other women for one reason or another; but that this, he knew, was the great love of his life, and a love which would endure unchanged as long as his life lasted.

And the tale tells how the Comte de la Forêt stroked a gray beard and said:

"Well, after all, Puitsange is a good fief—"

"As if that mattered!" cried his daughter, indignantly. "My father, you are a deplorably sordid person."

"My dear," replied the old gentleman, "it does matter. Fiefs last."

So he gave his consent to the match, and the two young people were married on Walburga's eve, on the last day of April.

And they narrate how Florian de Puitsange was vexed by a thought that was in his mind. He did not know what this thought was. But something he had overlooked; something there was he had meant to do, and had not done; and a troubling consciousness of this lurked at the back of his mind like a small formless cloud. All day, while bustling about other matters, he had groped toward this unapprehended thought.

Now he had it: Tiburce.

The young Vicomte de Puitsange stood in the doorway, looking back into the bright hall where they of Storisende were dancing at his marriage feast. His wife, for a whole half-hour his wife, was dancing with handsome Etienne de Nérac. Her glance met Florian's, and Adelaide flashed him an especial smile. Her hand went out as though to touch him, for all that the width of the hall severed them.

Florian remembered presently to smile back at her. Then he went out of the castle into a starless night that was as quiet as an unvoiced menace. A small and hard and gnarled-looking moon ruled over the dusk's secrecy. The moon this night, afloat in a luminous, gray void, somehow reminded Florian of a glistening and unripe huge apple.

The foliage about him moved at most as a sleeper breathes as Florian descended eastward through the walled gardens, and so came to the graveyard. White mists were rising, such mists as the witches of Amneran notoriously evoked in these parts on each Walburga's eve to purchase recreations which squeamishness leaves undescribed.

For five years now Tiburce d'Arnay had lain there. Florian thought of his dead comrade and of the love which had been between them—a love more perfect and deeper and higher than commonly exists between men; and the thought came to Florian, and was petulantly thrust away, that Adelaide loved ignorantly where Tiburce d'Arnay had loved with comprehension. Yes, he had known almost the worst of Florian de Puitsange, this dear lad who, none the less, had flung himself between Black Torrismond's sword and the breast of Florian de Puitsange. And it seemed to Florian unfair that all should prosper with him, and Tiburce lie there imprisoned in dirt which shut away the color and variousness of things and the drollness of things, wherein Tiburce d'Arnay had taken such joy. And Tiburce, it seemed to Florian—for this was a strange night—was struggling futilely under all that dirt, which shut out movement, and clogged the mouth of Tiburce, and would not let him speak, and was struggling to voice a desire which was unsatisfied and hopeless.

"O comrade dear," said Florian, "you who loved merriment, there is a feast afoot on this strange night, and my heart is sad that you are not here to share in the feasting. Come, come, Tiburce, a right trusty friend you were to me; and, living or dead, you should not fail to make merry at my wedding."

Thus he spoke. White mists were rising, and it was Walburga's eve.

So a queer thing happened, and it was that the earth upon the grave began to heave and to break in fissures, as when a mole passes through the ground. And other queer things happened after that, and presently Tiburce d'Arnaye was standing there, gray and vague in the moonlight as he stood there brushing the mold from his brows, and as he stood there blinking bright, wild eyes. And he was not greatly changed, it seemed to Florian; only the brows and nose of Tiburce cast no shadows upon his face, nor did his moving hand cast any shadow there, either, though the moon was naked overhead.

"You had forgotten the promise that was between us," said Tiburce; and his voice had not changed much, though it was smaller.

"It is true. I had forgotten. I remember now." And Florian shivered a little, not with fear, but with distaste.

"A man prefers to forget these things when he marries. It is natural enough. But are you not afraid of me who come from yonder?"

"Why should I be afraid of you, Tiburce, who gave your life for mine?"

"I do not say. But we change yonder."

"And does love change, Tiburce? For surely love is immortal."

"Living or dead, love changes. I do not say love dies in us who may hope to gain nothing more from love. Still, lying alone in the dark clay, there is nothing to do as yet save to think of what life was, and of what sunlight was, and of what we sang and whispered in dark places when we had lips; and of how young grass and murmuring waters and the high stars beget fine follies even now; and to think of how merry our loved ones still contrive to be even now with their new playfellows. Such reflections are not always conducive to philanthropy."

"Tell me," said Florian then, "and is there no way in which we who are still alive may aid you to be happier yonder?"

"Oh, but assuredly," replied Tiburce d'Arnaye, and he discoursed of curious matters; and as he talked, the mists about the graveyard thickened. "And so," Tiburce said, in concluding his tale, "it is not permitted that I make merry at your wedding after the fashion of those who are still in the warm flesh. But now that you recall our ancient compact, it is permitted I have my peculiar share in the merriment, and I drink with you to the bride's welfare."

"I drink," said Florian as he took the proffered cup, "to the welfare of my beloved Adelaide, whom alone of women I have really loved, and whom I shall love always."

"I perceive," replied the other, "that you must still be having your joke."

Then Florian drank, and after him Tiburce. And Florian said:

"But it is a strange drink, Tiburce, and now that you have tasted it you are changed."

"You have not changed, at least," Tiburce answered, and for the first time he smiled, a little perturbingly by reason of the change in him.

"Tell me," said Florian, "of how you fare yonder."

So Tiburce told him of yet more curious matters. Now the augmenting mists had shut off all the rest of the world. Florian could see only vague, rolling graynesses and a gray and changed Tiburce sitting there, with bright, wild eyes, and discoursing in a small chill voice. The appearance of a woman came, and sat beside him on the right. She, too, was gray, as became Eve's senior; and she made a sign which Florian remembered, and it troubled him. Tiburce said then:

"And now, young Florian, you who were once so dear to me, it is to your welfare I drink."

"I drink to yours, Tiburce."

Tiburce drank first; and Florian, having drunk in turn, cried out: "You have changed beyond recognition!"

"You have not changed," Tiburce d'Arnaye replied again. "Now let me tell you of our pastimes yonder."

With that he talked of exceedingly curious matters. And Florian began to grow dissatisfied, for Tiburce was no longer recognizable, and Tiburce whispered things uncomfortable to believe; and other eyes, as wild as his, but lit with red flarings from behind, like a beast's eyes, showed in the mists to this side and to that side, and unhappy beings were passing through the mists upon secret errands which they discharged unwillingly. Then, too, the appearance of a gray man now sat to the left of that which had been Tiburce d'Arnaye, and this new-comer was marked so that all might know who he was; and Florian's heart was troubled to note how handsome and how admirable was that desecrated face even now.

"But I must go," said Florian, "lest they miss me at Storisende and Adelaide be worried."

"Surely it will not take long to toss off a third cup. Nay, comrade, who were once so dear, let us two now drink our last toast together. Then go, in Sclaug's name, and celebrate your marriage. But before that let us drink to the continuance of human mirth-making everywhere."

Florian drank first. Then Tiburce took his turn, looking at Florian as Tiburce drank slowly. As he drank, Tiburce d'Arnaye was changed even more, and the shape of him altered, and the shape of him trickled as though Tiburce were builded of sliding fine white sand. So Tiburce d'Arnaye returned to his own place. The appearances that had sat to his left and to his right were no longer there to trouble Florian with memories. And Florian saw that the mists of Walburga's eve had departed, and that the sun was rising, and that the graveyard was all overgrown with nettles and tall grass.

He had not remembered the place being thus, and it seemed to him the night had passed with unnatural quickness. But he thought more of the fact that he had been beguiled into spending his wedding-night in a graveyard in such questionable company, and of what explanation he could make to Adelaide.

II. Of Young Persons in May

The tale tells how Florian de Puysange came in the dawn through flowering gardens, and heard young people from afar, already about their maying. Two by two he saw them from afar as they went with romping and laughter into the tall woods behind Storisende to fetch back the May-pole with dubious old rites. And as they went they sang, as was customary, that song which Raimbaut de Vaqueiras made in the ancient time in honor of May's ageless triumph.

Sang they:

"May shows with godlike showing
To-day for each that sees
May's magic overthrowing
All musty memories
In him whom May decrees
To be love's own. He saith,
I wear love's liveries
Until released by death.

"Thus all we laud May's sowing,
Nor heed how harvests please
When nowhere grain worth growing
Greets autumn's questing breeze,
And garnerers garner these—
Vain words and wasted breath
And spilth and tasteless lees—
Until released by death.

"Unwillingly foreknowing
That love with May-time flees,
We take this day's bestowing,
And feed on fantasies
Such as love lends for ease
Where none but travailleth,
With lean, infrequent fees,
Until released by death."

And Florian shook his sleek, black head. "A very foolish and pessimistical old song, a superfluous song, and a song that is particularly out of place in the loveliest spot in the loveliest of all possible worlds."

Yet Florian took no inventory of the gardens. There was but a happy sense of green and gold, with blue topping all; of twinkling, fluent, tossing leaves and of the gray under side of elongated, straining leaves; a sense of pert bird-noises, and of a longer shadow than usual slanting before him, and a sense of youth and well-being everywhere. Certainly it was not a morning wherein pessimism might hope to flourish.

Instead, it was of Adelaide that Florian thought: of the tall, impulsive, and yet timid, fair girl who was both shrewd and innocent, and of her tenderly colored loveliness, and of his abysmally unmerited felicity in having won her. Why, but what, he reflected, grimacing—what if he had too hastily married

somebody else? For he had earlier fancied other women for one reason or another: but this, he knew, was the great love of his life, and a love which would endure unchanged as long as his life lasted.

III. What Comes of Marrying Happily

The tale tells how Florian de Puysange found Adelaide in the company of two ladies who were unknown to him. One of these was very old, the other an imposing matron in middle life. The three were pleasantly shaded by young oak-trees; beyond was a tall hedge of clipped yew. The older women were at chess, while Adelaide bent her meek, golden head to some of that fine needle-work in which the girl delighted. And beside them rippled a small sunlit stream, which babbled and gurgled with silver flashes. Florian hastily noted these things as he ran laughing to his wife.

"Heart's dearest!" he cried. And he saw, perplexed, that Adelaide had risen with a faint, wordless cry, and was gazing at him as though she were puzzled and alarmed a very little.

"Such an adventure as I have to tell you of!" said Florian then.

"But, hey, young man, who are you that would seem to know my daughter so well?" demanded the lady in middle life, and rose majestically from her chess-game.

Florian stared, as he well might.

"Your daughter, madame! But certainly you are not Dame Melicent."

At this the old, old woman raised her nodding head.

"Dame Melicent? And was it I you were seeking, sir?"

Now Florian looked from one to the other of these incomprehensible strangers, bewildered; and his eyes came back to his lovely wife, and his lips smiled irresolutely.

"Is this some jest to punish me, my dear?" But then a new and graver trouble kindled in his face, and his eyes narrowed, for there was something odd about his wife also.

"I have been drinking in queer company," he said. "It must be that my head is not yet clear. Now certainly it seems to me that you are Adelaide de la Forêt, and certainly it seems to me that you are not Adelaide."

The girl replied:

"Why, no, messire; I am Sylvie de Nointel."

"Come, come," said the middle-aged lady, briskly, "let us have an end of this play-acting! There has been no Adelaide de la Forêt in these parts for some twenty-five years, as nobody knows better than I. Young fellow, let us have a sniff at you. No, you are not tipsy, after all. Well, I am glad of that. So let us get to the bottom of this business. What do they call you when you are at home?"

"Florian de Puysange," he answered speaking meekly enough. This capable large person was to the young man rather intimidating.

"La!" said she. She looked at him very hard. She nodded gravely two or three times, so that her double chin opened and shut.

"Yes, and you favor him. How old are you?" He told her twenty-four. She said inconsequently: "So I was a fool, after all. Well, young man, you will never be as good-looking as your father, but I trust you have an honester nature. However, bygones are bygones. Is the old rascal still living, and was it he that had the impudence to send you to me?"

"My father, madame, was slain at the Battle of Marchfeld—"

"Some fifty years ago! And you are twenty-four. Young man, your parentage had unusual features, or else we are at cross-purposes. Let us start at the beginning of this. You tell us you are called Florian de Puysange and that you have been drinking in queer company. Now let us have the whole story."

Florian told of last night's happenings, with no more omissions than seemed desirable with feminine auditors.

Then the old woman said:

"I think this is a true tale, my daughter, for the witches of Amneran contrive strange things, with mists to aid them, and with Lilith and Sclaug to abet. Yes, and this fate has fallen before to men that have been over-friendly with the dead."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the stout lady.

"But, no, my daughter. Thus seven persons slept at Ephesus, from the time of Decius to the time of Theodosius—"

"Still, Mother—"

"And the proof of it is that they were called Constantine and Dionysius and John and Malchus and Marcian and Maximian and Serapion. They were duly canonized. You cannot deny that this thing happened without asserting no less than seven blessed saints to have been unprincipled liars, and that would be a very horrible heresy—"

"Yet, Mother, you know as well as I do—"

"And thus Epimenides, another excellently spoken-of saint, slept at Athens for fifty-seven years. Thus Charlemagne slept in the Untersberg, and will sleep until the ravens of Miramon Lluagor have left his mountains. Thus Rhyning Thomas in the Eildon Hills, thus Ogier in Avalon, thus Oisin—"

The old lady bade fair to go on interminably in her gentle, resolute, piping old voice, but the other interrupted.

"Well, Mother, do not excite yourself about it, for it only makes your asthma worse, and does no especial good to anybody. Things may be as you say. Certainly I intended nothing irreligious. Yet these extended naps, appropriate enough for saints and emperors, are out of place in one's own family. So, if it is not stuff and nonsense, it ought to be. And that I stick to."

"But we forget the boy, my dear," said the old lady. "Now listen, Florian de Puysange. Thirty years ago last night, to the month and the day, it was that you vanished from our knowledge, leaving my daughter a forsaken bride. For I am what the years have made of Dame Melicent, and this is my daughter Adelaide, and yonder is her daughter Sylvie de Nointel."

"La! Mother," observed the stout lady, "but are you certain it was the last of April? I had been thinking it was some time in June. And I protest it could not have been all of thirty years. Let me see now, Sylvie, how old is your brother Richard? Twenty-eight, you say. Well, Mother, I always said you had a marvellous memory for things like that, and I often envy you. But how time does fly, to be sure!"

And Florian was perturbed.

"For this is an awkward thing, and Tiburce had played me an unworthy trick. He never did know when to leave off joking; but such posthumous frivolity is past endurance. For, see now, in what a pickle it has landed me! I have outlived my friends, I may encounter difficulty in regaining my fiefs, and certainly I have lost the fairest wife man ever had. Oh, can it be, madame, that you are indeed my Adelaide!"

"Yes, every pound of me, poor boy, and that says much."

"And that you have been untrue to the eternal fidelity which you swore to me here by this very stream? Oh, but I cannot believe it was thirty years ago, for not a grass-blade or a pebble has been altered; and I perfectly remember the lapping of water under those lichenized rocks, and that continuous file of ripples yonder, which are shaped like arrow-heads."

Adelaide rubbed her nose.

"Did I promise eternal fidelity? I can hardly remember that far back. But I remember I wept a great deal, and my parents assured me you were either dead or a rascal, so that tears could not help either way. Then Ralph de Nointel came along, good man, and made me a fair husband, as husbands go—"

"As for that stream," then said Dame Melicent, "it is often I have thought of that stream, sitting here with my grandchildren where I once sat with gay young men whom nobody remembers now save me. Yes, it is strange to think that instantly, and within the speaking of any simple word, no drop of water retains the place it held before the word was spoken; and yet the stream remains unchanged, and stays as it was when I sat here with those young men who are gone. Yes, that is a strange thought, and it is a sad thought, too, for those of us who are old."

"But, Mother, of course the stream remains unchanged," agreed Dame Adelaide. "Streams always do except at high water. Everybody knows that, and I see nothing remarkable about it. As for you, Florian, if you stickle for love's being an immortal affair," she added, with a large twinkle, "I would have you know I have been a widow for three years. So the matter could be arranged."

Florian looked at her sadly. To him the situation was incongruous with the terrible archness of a fat woman.

"But, madame, you are no longer the same person."

She patted him upon the shoulder.

"Come, Florian, there is some sense in you, after all. Console yourself, lad, with the reflection that if you had stuck manfully by your wife instead of mooning about graveyards, I would still be just as I am to-day, and you would be tied to me. Your friend probably knew what he was about when he drank to our welfare, for we should never have suited each other, as you can see for yourself. Well, Mother, many things fall out queerly in this world, but with age we learn to accept what happens without flustering too much over it. What are we to do with this resurrected old lover of mine?"

It was horrible to Florian to see how prosaically these women dealt with his unusual misadventure. Here was a miracle occurring virtually before their eyes, and these women accepted it with maddening tranquillity as an affair for which they were not responsible. Florian began to reflect that elderly persons were always more or less unsympathetic and inadequate.

"First of all," said Dame Melicent, "I would give him some breakfast. He must be hungry after all these years. And you could put him in Adhelmar's room—"

"But," Florian said wildly, to Dame Adelaide, "you have committed the crime of bigamy, and you are, after all, my wife!"

She replied, herself not unworried:

"Yes, but, Mother, both the cook and the butler are somewhere in the bushes yonder, up to some nonsense that I prefer to know nothing about. You know how servants are, particularly on holidays. I could scramble him some eggs, though, with a rasher. And Adhelmar's room it had better be, I suppose, though I had meant to have it turned out. But as for bigamy and being your wife," she concluded more cheerfully, "it seems to me the least said the soonest mended. It is to nobody's interest to rake up those foolish bygones, so far as I can see."

"Adelaide, you profane equally love, which is divine, and marriage, which is a holy sacrament."

"Florian, do you really love Adelaide de Nointel?" asked this terrible woman. "And now that I am free to listen to your proposals, do you wish to marry me?"

"Well, no," said Florian; "for, as I have just said, you are no longer the same person."

"Why, then, you see for yourself. So do you quit talking nonsense about immortality and sacraments."

"But, still," cried Florian, "love is immortal. Yes, I repeat to you, precisely as I told Tiburce, love is immortal."

Then said Dame Melicent, nodding her shriveled old head:

"When I was young, and served by nimbler senses and desires, and housed in brightly colored flesh, there were many men who loved me. Minstrels yet tell of the men that loved me, and of how many tall men were slain because of their love for me, and of how in the end it was Perion who won me. For the noblest and the most faithful of all my lovers was Perion of the Forest, and through tempestuous years he sought me with a love that conquered time and chance; and so he won me. Thereafter he made me a fair husband, as husbands go. But I might not stay the girl he had loved, nor might he remain the lad that Melicent had dreamed of, with dreams be-drugging the long years in which Demetrios held Melicent a prisoner, and youth went away from her. No, Perion and I could not do that, any more than might two drops of water there retain their place in the stream's flowing. So Perion and I grew old together, friendly enough; and our senses and desires began to serve us more drowsily, so that we did not greatly mind the falling away of youth, nor greatly mind to note what shriveled hands now moved before us, performing common tasks; and we were content enough. But of the high passion that had wedded us there was no trace, and of little senseless human bickerings there were a great many. For one thing"—and the old lady's voice was changed—"for one thing, he was foolishly particular about what he would eat and what he would not eat, and that upset my house-keeping, and I had never any patience with such nonsense."

"Well, none the less," said Florian, "it is not quite nice of you to acknowledge it."

Then said Dame Adelaide:

"That is a true word, Mother. All men get finicky about their food, and think they are the only persons to be considered, and there is no end to it if once you begin to humor them. So there has to be a stand made. Well, and indeed my poor Ralph, too, was all for kissing and pretty talk at first, and I accepted it willingly enough. You know how girls are. They like to be made much of, and it is perfectly natural. But that leads to children. And when the children began to come, I had not much time to bother with him; and Ralph had his farming and his warfaring to keep him busy. A man with a growing family cannot afford to neglect his affairs. And certainly, being no fool, he began to notice that girls here and there had brighter eyes and trimmer waists than I. I do not know what such observations may have led to when he was away from me; I never inquired into it, because in such matters all men are fools. But I put up with no nonsense at home, and he made me a fair husband, as husbands go. That much I will say for him gladly; and if any widow says more than that, Florian, do you beware of her, for she is an untruthful woman."

"Be that as it may," replied Florian, "it is not quite becoming to speak thus of your dead husband. No doubt you speak the truth; there is no telling what sort of person you may have married in what still seems to me unseemly haste to provide me with a successor; but even so, a little charitable prevarication would be far more edifying."

He spoke with such earnestness that there fell a silence. The women seemed to pity him. And in the silence Florian heard from afar young persons returning from the woods behind Storisende, and bringing with them the May-pole. They were still singing.

Sang they:

"Unwillingly foreknowing
That love with May-time flees,

We take this day's bestowing,
And feed on fantasies—"

IV. YOUTH SOLVES IT

The tale tells how lightly and sweetly, and compassionately, too, then spoke young Sylvie de Nointel:

"Ah, but, assuredly, Messire Florian, you do not argue with my pets quite seriously. Old people always have some such queer notions. Of course love all depends upon what sort of person you are. Now, as I see it, mama and grandmama are not the sort of persons who have real love-affairs. Devoted as I am to both of them, I cannot but perceive they are lacking in real depth of sentiment. They simply do not understand such matters. They are fine, straightforward, practical persons, poor dears, and always have been, of course, for in things like that one does not change, as I have often noticed. And father, and grandfather, too, as I remember him, was kind-hearted and admirable and all that, but nobody could ever have expected him to be a satisfactory lover. Why, he was bald as an egg, the poor pet!"

And Sylvie laughed again at the preposterous notions of old people. She flashed an especial smile at Florian. Her hand went out as though to touch him, in an unforgotten gesture. "Old people do not understand," said Sylvie de Nointel in tones which took this handsome young fellow ineffably into confidence.

"Mademoiselle," said Florian, with a sigh that was part relief and all approval, "it is you who speak the truth, and your elders have fallen victims to the cynicism of a crassly material age. Love is immortal when it is really love and one is the right sort of person. There is the love—known to how few, alas! and a passion of which I regret to find your mother incapable—that endures unchanged until the end of life."

"I am so glad you think so, Messire Florian," she answered demurely.

"And do you not think so, mademoiselle?"

"How should I know," she asked him, "as yet?" He noted she had incredibly long lashes.

"Thrice happy is he that convinces you!" says Florian. And about them, who were young in the world's recaptured youth, spring triumphed with an ageless rural pageant, and birds cried to their mates. He noted the red brevity of her lips and their probable softness.

Meanwhile the elder women regarded each other.

"It is the season of May. They are young and they are together. Poor children!" said Dame Melicent. "Youth cries to youth for the toys of youth, and saying, 'Lo! I cry with the voice of a great god!'"

"Still," said Madame Adelaide, "Puysange is a good fief."

But Florian heeded neither of them as he stood there by the sunlit stream, in which no drop of water retained its place for a moment, and which yet did not alter in appearance at all. He did not heed his elders for the excellent reason that Sylvie de Nointel was about to speak, and he preferred to listen to her. For this girl, he knew, was lovelier than any other person had ever been since Eve first raised just such admiring, innocent, and venturesome eyes to inspect what must have seemed to her the quaintest

of all animals, called man. So it was with a shrug that Florian remembered how he had earlier fancied other women for one reason or another; since this, he knew, was the great love of his life, and a love which would endure unchanged as long as his life lasted.

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THE BEARER OF BURDENS

by Israel Zangwill

I

When her Fanny did at last marry, Natalya--as everybody called the old clo'-woman--was not over-pleased at the bargain. Natalya had imagined beforehand that for a matronly daughter of twenty-three, almost past the marrying age, any wedding would be a profitable transaction. But when a husband actually presented himself, all the old dealer's critical maternity was set a-bristle. Henry Elkman, she insisted, had not a true Jewish air. There was in the very cut of his clothes a subtle suggestion of going to the races.

It was futile of Fanny to insist that Henry had never gone to the races, that his duties as bookkeeper of S. Cohn's Clothing Emporium prevented him from going to the races, and that the cut of his clothes was intended to give tone to his own establishment.

'Ah, yes, he does not take _thee_ to the races,' she insisted in Yiddish. 'But all these young men with check suits and flowers in their buttonholes bet and gamble and go to the bad, and their wives and children fall back on their old mothers for support.'

'I shall not fall back on thee,' Fanny retorted angrily.

'And on whom else? A pretty daughter! Would you fall back on a stranger? Or perhaps you are thinking of the Board of Guardians!' And a shudder of humiliation traversed her meagre frame. For at sixty she was already meagre, had already the appearance of the venerable grandmother she was now to become, save that her hair, being only a pious wig, remained rigidly young and black. Life had always gone hard with her. Since her husband's death, when Fanny was a child, she had scraped together a scanty livelihood by selling odds and ends for a mite more than she gave for them. At the back doors of villas she haggled with miserly mistresses, gentlewoman and old-clo' woman linked by their common love of a bargain.

Natalya would sniff contemptuously at the muddle of ancient finery on the floor and spurn it with her foot. 'How can I sell that?' she would inquire. 'Last time I gave you too much--I lost by you.' And having wrung the price down to the lowest penny, she would pay it in clanking silver and copper from a grimy leather bag she wore hidden in her bosom; then, cramming the goods hastily into the maw of her sack, she would stagger joyously away. The men's garments she would modestly sell to a second-hand shop, but the women's she cleaned and turned and transmogrified and sold in Petticoat Lane of a Sunday morning; scavenger, earth-worm, and alchemist, she was a humble agent in the great economic process by which cast-off clothes renew their youth and freshness, and having set in their original sphere rise endlessly on other social horizons.

Of English she had, when she began, only enough to bargain with; but in one year of forced intercourse with English folk after her husband's death she learnt more than in her quarter of a century of residence in the Spitalfields Ghetto.

Fanny's function had been to keep house and prepare the evening meal, but the old clo'-woman's objection to her marriage was not selfish. She was quite ready to light her own fire and broil her own bloater after the day's tramp. Fanny had, indeed, offered to have her live in the elegant two-roomed cottage near King's Cross which Henry was furnishing. She could sleep in a convertible bureau in the parlour. But the old woman's independent spirit and her mistrust of her son-in-law made her prefer the humble Ghetto garret. Against all reasoning, she continued to feel something antipathetic in Henry's clothes and even in his occupation--perhaps it was really the subconscious antagonism of the old clo' and the new, subtly symbolic of the old generation and the smart new world springing up to tread it down. Henry himself was secretly pleased at her refusal. In the first ardours of courtship he had consented to swallow even the Polish crone who had strangely mothered his buxom British Fanny, but for his own

part he had a responsive horror of old clo'; felt himself of the great English world of fashion and taste, intimately linked with the burly Britons whose girths he recorded from his high stool at his glass-environed desk, and in touch even with the _lion comique_, the details of whose cheap but stylish evening dress he entered with a proud flourish.

II

The years went by, and it looked as if the old woman's instinct were awry. Henry did not go to the races, nor did Fanny have to fall back on her mother-in-law for the maintenance of herself and her two children, Becky and Joseph. On the contrary, she doubled her position in the social scale by taking a four-roomed house in the Holloway Road. Its proximity to the Clothing Emporium enabled Henry to come home for lunch. But, alas! Fanny was not allowed many years of enjoyment of these grandeurs and comforts. The one-roomed grave took her, leaving the four-roomed house incredibly large and empty. Even Natalya's Ghetto garret, which Fanny had not shared for seven years, seemed cold and vacant to the poor mother. A new loneliness fell upon her, not mitigated by ever rarer visits to her grandchildren. Devoid of the link of her daughter, the house seemed immeasurably aloof from her in the social scale. Henry was frigid and the little ones went with marked reluctance to this stern, forbidding old woman who questioned them as to their prayers and smelt of red-herrings. She ceased to go to the house.

And then at last all her smouldering distrust of Henry Elkman found overwhelming justification.

Before the year of mourning was up, before he was entitled to cease saying the _Kaddish_ (funeral hymn) for her darling Fanny, the wretch, she heard, was married again. And married--villainy upon villainy, horror upon horror--to a Christian girl, a heathen abomination. Natalya was wrestling with her over-full sack when she got the news from a gossiping lady client, and she was boring holes for the passage of string to tie up its mouth. She turned the knife viciously, as if it were in Henry Elkman's heart.

She did not know the details of the piquant, tender courtship between him and the pretty assistant at the great drapery store that neighboured the Holloway Clothing Emporium, any more than she understood the gradual process which had sapped Henry's instinct of racial isolation, or how he had passed from admiration of British ways into entire abandonment of Jewish. She was spared, too, the knowledge that latterly her own Fanny had slid with him into the facile paths of impiety; that they had ridden for a breath of country air on Sabbath

afternoons. They had been considerate enough to hide that from her. To the old clo'-woman's crude mind, Henry Elkman existed as a monster of ready-made wickedness, and she believed even that he had been married in church and baptized, despite that her informant tried to console her with the assurance that the knot had been tied in a Registrar's office.

'May he be cursed with the boils of Pharaoh!' she cried in her picturesque jargon. 'May his fine clothes fall from his flesh and his flesh from his bones! May my Fanny's outraged soul plead against him at the Judgment Bar! And she--this heathen female--may her death be sudden!' And she drew the ends of the string tightly together, as though round the female's neck.

'Hush, you old witch!' cried the gossip, revolted; 'and what would become of your own grandchildren?'

'They cannot be worse off than they are now, with a heathen in the house. All their Judaism will become corrupted. She may even baptize them. Oh, Father in Heaven!'

The thought weighed upon her. She pictured the innocent Becky and Joseph kissing crucifixes. At the best there would be no _kosher_ food in the house any more. How could this stranger understand the mysteries of purging meat, of separating meat-plates from butter-plates?

At last she could bear the weight no longer. She took the Elkman house in her rounds, and, bent under her sack, knocked at the familiar door. It was lunch-time, and unfamiliar culinary smells seemed wafted along the passage. Her morbid imagination scented bacon. The orthodox amulet on the doorpost did not comfort her; it had been left there, forgotten, a mute symbol of the Jewish past.

A pleasant young woman with blue eyes and fresh-coloured cheeks opened the door.

The blood surged to Natalya's eyes, so that she could hardly see.

'Old clo',' she said mechanically.

'No, thank you,' replied the young woman. Her voice was sweet, but it sounded to Natalya like the voice of Lilith, stealer of new-born children. Her rosy cheek seemed smeared with seductive paint. In the background glistened the dual crockery of the erst pious kitchen which the new-comer profaned. And between Natalya and it, between Natalya and her grandchildren, this alien girlish figure seemed to stand barrier-wise. She could not cross the threshold without explanations.

'Is Mr. Elkman at home?' she asked.

'You know the name!' said the young woman, a little surprised.

'Yes, I have been here a good deal.' The old woman's sardonic accent was lost on the listener.

'I am sorry there is nothing this time,' she replied.

'Not even a pair of old shoes?'

'No.'

'But the dead woman's----? Are you, then, standing in them?'

The words were so fierce and unexpected, the crone's eyes blazed so weirdly, that the new wife recoiled with a little shriek.

'Henry!' she cried.

Fork in hand, he darted in from the living-room, but came to a sudden standstill.

'What do you want here?' he muttered.

'Fanny's shoes!' she cried.

'Who is it?' his wife's eyes demanded.

'A half-witted creature we deal with out of charity,' he gestured back. And he put her inside the room-door, whispering, 'Let me get rid of her.'

'So, that's your painted poppet,' hissed his mother-in-law in Yiddish.

'Painted?' he said angrily. 'Madge painted? She's just as natural as a rosy apple. She's a country girl, and her mother was a lady.'

'Her mother? Perhaps! But she? You see a glossy high hat marked sixteen and sixpence, and you think it's new. But I know what it's come from--a battered thing that has rolled in the gutter. Ah, how she could have bewitched you, when there are so many honest Jewesses without husbands!

'I am sorry she doesn't please you; but, after all, it's my business, and not yours.'

'Not mine? After I gave you my Fanny, and she slaved for you and bore you children?'

'It's just for her children that I had to marry.'

'What? You had to marry a Christian for the sake of Fanny's children? Oh, God forgive you!'

'We are not in Poland now,' he said sulkily.

'Ah, I always said you were a sinner in Israel. My Fanny has been taken for your sins. A black death on your bones.'

'If you don't leave off cursing, I shall call a policeman.'

'Oh, lock me up, lock me up--instead of your shame. Let the whole world know that.'

'Go away, then. You have no right to come here and frighten Madge--my wife. She is in delicate health, as it is.'

'May she be an atonement for all of us! I have the right to come here as much as I please.'

'You have no right.'

'I have a right to the children. My blood is in their veins.'

'You have no right. The children are their father's.'

'Yes, their Father's in heaven,' and she raised her hand like an ancient prophetess, while the other supported her bag over her shoulder. 'The children are the children of Israel, and they must carry forward the yoke of the Law.'

'And what do you propose?' he said, with a scornful sniff.

'Give me the children. I will elevate them in the fear of the Lord. You go your own godless way, free of burdens--you and your Christian poppet. You no longer belong to us. Give me the children, and I'll go away.'

He looked at her quizzingly. 'You have been drinking, my good mother-in-law.'

'Ay, the waters of affliction. Give me the children.'

'But they won't go with you. They love their step-mother.'

'Love that painted jade? They, with Jewish blood warm in their veins, with the memory of their mother warm in their hearts? Impossible!'

He opened the door gently. 'Becky! Joe! No, don't you come, Madge, darling. It's all right. The old lady wants to say "Good-day" to the children.'

The two children tripped into the passage, with napkins tied round their chins, their mouths greasy, but the rest of their persons unfamiliarly speckless and tidy. They stood still at the sight of their grandmother, so stern and frowning. Henry shut the door carefully.

'My lambs!' Natalya cried, in her sweetest but harsh tones, 'Won't you come and kiss me?'

Becky, a mature person of seven, advanced courageously and surrendered her cheek to her grandmother.

'How are you, granny?' she said ceremoniously.

'And Joseph?' said Natalya, not replying. 'My heart and my crown, will he not come?'

The four-and-a-half year old Joseph stood dubiously, with his fist in his mouth.

'Bring him to me, Becky. Tell him I want you and him to come and live with me.'

Becky shrugged her precocious shoulders. 'He may. I won't,' she said laconically.

'Oh, Becky!' said the grandmother. 'Do you want to stay here and torture your poor mother?'

Becky stared. 'She's dead,' she said.

'Yes, but her soul lives and watches over you. Come, Joseph, apple of my eye, come with me.'

She beckoned enticingly, but the little boy, imagining the invitation was to enter her bag and be literally carried away therein, set up a terrific howl. Thereupon the pretty young woman emerged hastily, and the child, with a great sob of love and confidence, ran to her and nestled in her arms.

'Mamma, mamma,' he cried.

Henry looked at the old woman with a triumphant smile.

Natalya went hot and cold. It was not only that little Joseph had gone to this creature. It was not even that he had accepted her maternity. It was this word 'mamma' that stung. The word summed up all the blasphemous foreignness of the new domesticity. 'Mamma' was redolent of cold Christian houses in whose doorways the old clo'-woman sometimes heard it. Fanny had been 'mother'--the dear, homely, Jewish 'mother.' This 'mamma,' taught to the orphans, was like the haughty parade of Christian elegance across her grave.

'When _mamma's_ shoes are to be sold, don't forget me,' Natalya hissed. 'I'll give you the best price in the market.'

Henry shuddered, but replied, half pushing her outside: 'Certainly, certainly. Good-afternoon.'

'I'll buy them at your own price--ah, I see them coming, coming into my bag.'

The door closed on her grotesque sibylline intensity, and Henry clasped his wife tremblingly to his bosom and pressed a long kiss upon her fragrant cherry lips.

Later on he explained that the crazy old clo'-woman was known to the children, as to everyone in the neighbourhood, as 'Granny.'

III

In the bearing of her first child the second Mrs. Elkman died. The rosy face became a white angelic mask, the dainty figure lay in statuesque severity, and a screaming, bald-headed atom of humanity was the compensation for this silence. Henry Elkman was overwhelmed by grief and superstition.

'For three things women die in childbirth,' kept humming in his brain from his ancient Hebrew lore. He did not remember what they were, except that one was the omission of the wife to throw into the fire the lump of dough from the Sabbath bread. But these neglects could not be visited on a Christian, he thought dully. The only distraction of his grief was the infant's pressing demand on his attention.

It was some days before the news penetrated to the old woman.

'It is his punishment,' she said with solemn satisfaction. 'Now my

Fanny's spirit will rest.'

But she did not gloat over the decree of the God of Israel as she had imagined beforehand, nor did she call for the dead woman's old clo'. She was simply content--an unrighteous universe had been set straight again like a mended watch. But she did call, without her bag, to inquire if she could be of service in this tragic crisis.

'Out of my sight, you and your evil eye!' cried Henry as he banged the door in her face.

Natalya burst into tears, torn by a chaos of emotions. So she was still to be shut out.

IV

The next news that leaked into Natalya's wizened ear was as startling as Madge's death. Henry had married again. Doubtless with the same pretext of the children's needs he had taken unto himself a third wife, and again without the decencies of adequate delay. And this wife was a Jewess, as of yore. Henry had reverted matrimonially to the fold. Was it conscience, was it terror? Nobody knew. But everybody knew that the third Mrs. Elkman was a bouncing beauty of a good orthodox stock, that she brought with her fifty pounds in cash, besides bedding and house-linen accumulated by her parents without prevision that she would marry an old hand, already provided with these household elements.

The old clo'-woman's emotions were more mingled than ever. She felt vaguely that the Jewish minister should not so unquestioningly have accorded the scamp the privileges of the hymeneal canopy. Some lustral rite seemed necessary to purify him of his Christian conjunction. And the memory of Fanny was still outraged by this burying of her, so to speak, under layers of successive wives. On the other hand, the children would revert to Judaism, and they would have a Jewish mother, not a mamma, to care for them and to love them. The thought consoled her for being shut out of their lives, as she felt she must have been, even had Henry been friendlier. This third wife had alienated her from the household, had made her kinship practically remote. She had sunk to a sort of third cousin, or a mother-in-law twice removed.

The days went on, and again the Elkman household occupied the gossips, and news of it--second-hand, like everything that came to her--was picked up by Natalya on her rounds. Henry's third wife was, it transpired, a melancholy failure. Her temper was frightful, she beat her step-children, and--worst and rarest sin in the Jewish housewife--she drank. Henry was said to be in despair.

'_Nebbich_', the poor little children!' cried Natalya, horrified. Her brain began plotting how to interfere, but she could find no way.

The weeks passed, with gathering rumours of the iniquities of the third Mrs. Elkman, and then at last came the thunder-clap--Henry had disappeared without leaving a trace. The wicked wife and the innocent brats had the four-roomed home to themselves. The Clothing Emporium knew him no more. Some whispered suicide, others America. Benjamin Beckenstein, the cutter of the Emporium, who favoured the latter hypothesis reported a significant saying: 'I have lived with two angels; I can't live with a demon.'

'Ah, at last he sees my Fanny was an angel,' said Natalya, neglecting to draw the deduction anent America, and passing over the other angel. And she embroidered the theme. How indeed could a man who had known the blessing of a sober, God-fearing wife endure a drunkard and a child-beater? 'No wonder he killed himself!'

The gossips pointed out that the saying implied flight rather than suicide.

'You are right!' Natalya admitted illogically. 'Just what a coward and blackguard like that would do--leave the children at the mercy of the woman he couldn't face himself. How in Heaven's name will they live?'

'Oh, her father, the furrier, will have to look after them,' the gossips assured her. 'He gave her good money, you know, fifty pounds and the bedding. Ah, trust Elkman for that. He knew he wasn't leaving the children to starve.'

'I don't know so much,' said the old woman, shaking her bewigged head.

What was to be done? Suppose the furrier refused the burden. But Henry's flight, she felt, had removed her even farther from the Elkman household. If she went to spy out the land, she would now have to face the virago in possession. But no! on second thoughts it was this other woman whom Henry's flight had changed to a stranger. What had the wretch to do with the children? She was a mere intruder in the house. Out with her, or at least out with the children.

Yes, she would go boldly there and demand them. 'Poor Becky! Poor Joseph!' her heart wailed. 'You to be beaten and neglected after having known the love of a mother.' True, it would not be easy to support them. But a little more haggling, a little more tramping, a little more mending, and a little less gorging and gormandising! They would be at school during the day, so would not interfere with her rounds, and in the evening she could have them with her as she sat

refurbishing the purchases of the day. Ah, what a blessed release from the burden of loneliness, heavier than the heaviest sack! It was well worth the price. And then at bedtime she would say the Hebrew night-prayer with them and tuck them up, just as she had once done with her Fanny.

But how if the woman refused to yield them up--as Natalya could fancy her refusing--out of sheer temper and devilry? What if, amply subsidized by her well-to-do parent, she wished to keep the little ones by her and revenge upon them their father's desertion, or hold them hostages for his return? Why, then, Natalya would use cunning--ay, and force, too--she would even kidnap them. Once in their grandmother's hands, the law would see to it that they did not go back to this stranger, this bibulous brute, whose rights over them were nil.

It was while buying up on a Sunday afternoon the sloughed vestments of a Jewish family in Holloway that her resolve came to a head. A cab would be necessary to carry her goods to her distant garret. What an opportunity for carrying off the children at the same time! The house was actually on her homeward route. The economy of it tickled her, made her overestimate the chances of capture. As she packed the motley, far-spreading heap into the symmetry of her sack, pressing and squeezing the clothes incredibly tighter and tighter till it seemed a magic sack that could swallow up even the Holloway Clothing Emporium, Natalya's brain revolved feverish fancy-pictures of the coming adventure.

Leaving the bag in the basement passage, she ran to fetch a cab. Usually the hiring of the vehicle occupied Natalya half an hour. She would harangue the Christian cabmen on the rank, pleading her poverty, and begging to be conveyed with her goods for a ridiculous sum. At first none of them would take notice of the old Jewish crone, but would read their papers in contemptuous indifference. But gradually, as they remained idly on the rank, the endless stream of persuasion would begin to percolate, and at last one would relent, half out of pity, and would end by bearing the sack gratuitously on his shoulder from the house to his cab. Often there were two sacks, quite filling the interior of a four-wheeler, and then Natalya would ride triumphantly beside her cabby on the box, the two already the best of friends. Things went ill if Natalya did not end by trading off something in the sacks against the fare--at a new profit.

But to-day she was too excited to strike more than a mediocre bargain. The cumbrous sack was hoisted into the cab. Natalya sprang in beside it, and in a resolute voice bade the driver draw up for a moment at the Elkman home.

The unwonted phenomenon of a cab brought Becky to the door ere her grandmother could jump out. She was still under ten, but prematurely developed in body as in mind. There was something unintentionally insolent in her precocity, in her habitual treatment of adults as equals; but now her face changed almost to a child's, and with a glad tearful cry of 'Oh, grandmother!' she sprang into the old woman's arms.

It was the compensation for little Joseph's 'mamma.' Tears ran down the old woman's cheeks as she hugged the strayed lamb to her breast.

A petulant infantile wail came from within, but neither noted it.

'Where is your step-mother, my poor angel?' Natalya asked in a half whisper.

Becky's forehead gloomed in an ugly frown. Her face became a woman's again. 'One o'clock the public-houses open on Sundays,' she snorted.

'Oh, my God!' cried Natalya, forgetting that the circumstance was favouring her project. 'A Jewish woman! You don't mean to say that she drinks in public-houses?'

'You don't suppose I would let her drink here,' said Becky. 'We have nice scenes, I can tell you. The only consolation is she's better-tempered when she's quite drunk.'

The infant's wail rang out more clamorously.

'Hush, you little beast!' Becky ejaculated, but she moved mechanically within, and her grandmother followed her.

All the ancient grandeur of the sitting-room seemed overclouded with shabbiness and untidiness. To Natalya everything looked and smelt like the things in her bag. And there in a stuffy cradle a baby wrinkled its red face with shrieking.

Becky had bent over it, and was soothing it ere its existence penetrated at all to the old woman's preoccupied brain. Its pipings had been like an unheeded wail of wind round some centre of tragic experience. Even when she realized the child's existence her brain groped for some seconds in search of its identity.

Ah, the baby whose birth had cost that painted poppet's life! So it still lived and howled in unwelcome reminder and perpetuation of that

brief but shameful episode. 'Grow dumb like your mother,' she murmured resentfully. What a bequest of misery Henry Elkman had left behind him! Ah, how right she had been to suspect him from the very first!

'But where is my little Joseph?' she said aloud.

'He's playing somewhere in the street.'

'_Ach, mein Gott!_ Playing, when he ought to be weeping like this child of shame. Go and fetch him at once!'

'What do you want him for?'

'I am going to take you both away--out of this misery. You'd like to come and live with me--eh, my lamb?'

'Rather--anything's better than this.'

Natalya caught her to her breast again.

'Go and fetch my Joseph! But quick, quick, before the public-house woman comes back!'

Becky flew out, and Natalya sank into a chair, breathless with emotion and fatigue. The baby in the cradle beside her howled more vigorously, and automatically her foot sought the rocker, and she heard herself singing:

'Sleep, little baby, sleep,
Thy father shall be a Rabbi;
Thy mother shall bring thee almonds;
Blessings on thy little head.'

As the howling diminished, she realized with a shock that she was rocking this misbegotten infant--nay, singing to it a Jewish cradle-song full of inappropriate phrases. She withdrew her foot as though the rocker had grown suddenly red-hot. The yells broke out with fresh vehemence, and she angrily restored her foot to its old place. '_Nu, nu_' she cried, rocking violently, 'go to sleep.'

She stole a glance at it, when it grew stiller, and saw that the teat of its feeding-bottle was out of its mouth. 'There, there--suck!' she said, readjusting it. The baby opened its eyes and shot a smile at her, a wonderful, trustful smile from great blue eyes. Natalya trembled; those were the blue eyes that had supplanted the memory of Fanny's dark orbs, and the lips now sucking contentedly were the cherry lips of the painted poppet.

'_Nebbich_ ; the poor, deserted little orphan,' she apologized to herself. 'And this is how the new Jewish wife does her duty to her step-children. She might as well have been a Christian.' Then a remembrance that the Christian woman had seemingly been an unimpeachable step-mother confused her thoughts further. And while she was groping among them Becky returned, haling in Joseph, who in his turn haled in a kite with a long tail.

The boy, now a sturdy lad of seven, did not palpitate towards his grandmother with Becky's eagerness. Probably he felt the domestic position less. But he surrendered himself to her long hug. 'Did she beat him,' she murmured soothingly, 'beat my own little Joseph?'

'Don't waste time, granny,' Becky broke in petulantly, 'if we _are_ going.'

'No, my dear. We'll go at once.' And, releasing the boy, Natalya partly undid the lower buttons of his waistcoat.

'You wear no four-corner fringes!' she exclaimed tragically. 'She neglects even to see to that. Ah, it will be a good deed to carry you from this godless home.'

'But I don't want to go with you,' he said sullenly, reminded of past inquisitorial worryings about prayers.

'You little fool!' said Becky. 'You _are_ going--and in that cab.'

'In that cab?' he cried joyfully.

'Yes, my apple. And you will never be beaten again.'

'Oh, _she_ don't hurt!' he said contemptuously. 'She hasn't even got a cane--like at school.'

'But shan't we take our things?' said Becky.

'No, only the things you stand in. They shan't have any excuse for taking you back. I'll find you plenty of clothes, as good as new.'

'And little Daisy?'

'Oh, is it a girl? Your stepmother will look after that. She can't complain of one burden.'

She hustled the children into the cab, where, with the sack and herself, they made a tightly-packed quartette.

'I say, I didn't bargain for extras inside,' grumbled the cabman.

'You can't reckon these children,' said Natalya, with confused legal recollections; 'they're both under seven.'

The cabman started. Becky stared out of the window. 'I wonder if we'll pass Mrs. Elkman,' she said, amused. Joseph busied himself with disentangling the tails of his kite.

But Natalya was too absorbed to notice their indifference to her. That poor little Daisy! The image of the baby swam vividly before her. What a terrible fate to be left in the hands of the public-house woman! Who knew what would happen to it? What if, in her drunken fury at the absence of Becky and Joseph, she did it a mischief? At the best the besotted creature would not take cordially to the task of bringing it up. It was no child of hers--had not even the appeal of pure Jewish blood. And there it lay, smiling, with its beautiful blue eyes. It had smiled trustfully on herself, not knowing she was to leave it to its fate. And now it was crying; she heard it crying above the rattle of the cab. But how could she charge herself with it--she, with her daily rounds to make? The other children were grown up, passed the day at school. No, it was impossible. And the child's cry went on in her imagination louder and louder.

She put her head out of the window. 'Turn back! Turn back! I've forgotten something.'

The cabman swore. 'D'ye think you've taken me by the week?'

'Threepence extra. Drive back.'

The cab turned round, the innocent horse got a stinging flip of the whip, and set off briskly.

'What have you forgotten, grandmother?' said Becky. 'It's very careless of you.'

The cab stopped at the door. Natalya looked round nervously, sprang out, and then uttered a cry of despair.

'_Ach_, we shut the door!' And the inaccessible baby took on a tenfold desirability.

'It's all right,' said Becky. 'Just turn the handle.'

Natalya obeyed and ran in. There was the baby, not crying, but sleeping peacefully. Natalya snatched it up frenziedly, and hurried the fresh-squalling bundle into the cab.

'Taking Daisy?' cried Becky. 'But she isn't yours!'

Natalya shut the cab-door with a silencing bang, and the vehicle turned again Ghettowards.

VI

The fact that Natalya had taken possession of the children could not be kept a secret, but the step-mother's family made no effort to regain them, and, indeed, the woman herself shortly went the way of all Henry Elkmann's wives, though whether she, like the rest, had a successor, is unknown.

The sudden change from a lone old lady to a mater-familias was not, however, so charming as Natalya had imagined. The cost of putting Daisy out to nurse was a terrible tax, but this was nothing compared to the tax on her temper levied by her legitimate grandchildren, who began to grumble on the first night at the poverty and pokiness of the garret, and were thenceforward never without a lament for the good old times. They had, indeed, been thoroughly spoilt by the father and the irregular ménage. The Christian wife's influence had been refining but too temporary. It had been only long enough to wean Joseph from the religious burdens indoctrinated by Fanny, and thus to add to the grandmother's difficulties in coaxing him back to the yoke of piety.

The only sweet in Natalya's cup turned out to be the love of little Daisy, who grew ever more beautiful, gracious, and winning.

Natalya had never known so lovable a child. All Daisy did seemed to her perfect. For instant obedience and instant comprehension she declared her matchless.

One day, when Daisy was three, the child told the grandmother that in her momentary absence Becky had pulled Joseph's hair.

'Hush! You mustn't tell tales,' Natalya said reprovingly.

'Becky did not pull Joey's hair,' Daisy corrected herself instantly.

Much to the disgust of Becky, who wished to outgrow the Ghetto, even while she unconsciously manifested its worst heritages, Daisy picked up the Yiddish words and phrases, which, in spite of Becky's remonstrances, Natalya was too old to give up. This was not the only subject of dispute between Becky and the grandmother, whom she roundly accused of favouritism of Daisy, and she had not reached fifteen when, with an independence otherwise praiseworthy, she set up for herself on

her earnings in the fur establishment of her second step-mother's father, lodging with a family who, she said, bored her less than her grandmother.

In another year or so, freed from the compulsory education of the School Board, Joseph joined her. And thus, by the unforeseen turns of Fortune's wheel, the old-clo' woman of seventy-five was left alone with the child of seven.

But this child was compensation for all she had undergone, for all the years of trudging and grubbing and patching and turning. Daisy threaded her needle for her at night when her keen eyes began to fail, and while she made the old clo' into new, Daisy read aloud her English story-books. Natalya took an absorbing interest in these nursery tales, heard for the first time in her second childhood. 'Jack the Giant-killer,' 'Aladdin,' 'Cinderella,' they were all delightful novelties. The favourite story of both was 'Little Red Riding-Hood,' with its refrain of 'Grandmother, what large eyes you've got!' That could be said with pointed fun; it seemed to be written especially for them. Often Daisy would look up suddenly and say: 'Grandmother, what a large mouth you've got!' 'All the better to bite you with,' grandmother would reply. And then there would be hugs and kisses.

But Friday night was the great night, the one night of the week on which Natalya could be stopped from working. Only religion was strong enough to achieve that. The two Sabbath candles in the copper candlesticks stood on the white tablecloth, and were lighted as soon as the welcome dusk announced the advent of the holy day, and they shed their pious illumination on her dish of fish and the ritually-twisted loaves. And after supper Natalya would sing the Hebrew grace at much leisurely length and with great unction. Then she would tell stories of her youth in Poland--comic tales mixed with tales of oppression and the memories of ancient wrong. And Daisy would weep and laugh and thrill. The fusion of races had indeed made her sensitive and intelligent beyond the common, and Natalya was not unjustified in planning out for her some illustrious future.

But after eighteen months of this delightful life Natalya's wonderful vitality began slowly to collapse. She earned less and less, and, amid her gratitude to God for having relieved her of the burden of Becky and Joseph, a secret fear entered her heart. Would she be taken away before Daisy became self-supporting? Nay, would she even be able to endure the burden till the end? What made things worse was that, owing to the increase of immigrants, her landlord now exacted an extra shilling a week for rent. When Daisy was asleep the old woman hung over the bed, praying for life, for strength.

It was a sultry summer, making the trudge from door to door, under the

ever-swelling sack, almost intolerable. And a little thing occurred to bring home cruelly to Natalya the decline of all her resources, physical and financial. The children's country holiday was in the air at Daisy's Board School, throwing an aroma and a magic light over the droning class-room. Daisy was to go, was to have a fortnight with a cottager in Kent; but towards the expenses the child's parent or guardian was expected to contribute four shillings. Daisy might have gone free had she pleaded absolute poverty, but that would have meant investigation. From such humiliation Natalya shrank. She shrank even more from frightening the poor child by uncovering the skeleton of poverty. Most of all she shrank from depriving Daisy of all the rural delights on which the child's mind dwelt in fascinated anticipation. Natalya did not think much of the country herself, having been born in a poor Polish village, amid huts and pigs, but she would not disillusion Daisy.

By miles of extra trudging in the heat, and miracles of bargaining with bewildered housewives, Natalya raised the four shillings, and the unconscious Daisy glided off in the happy, noisy train, while on the platform Natalya waved her coloured handkerchief wet with tears.

That first night without the little sunshiny presence was terrible for the old-clo' woman. The last prop against decay and collapse seemed removed. But the next day a joyous postcard came from Daisy, which the greengrocer downstairs read to Natalya, and she was able to take up her sack again and go forth into the sweltering streets.

In the second week the child wrote a letter, saying that she had found a particular friend in an old lady, very kind and rich, who took her for drives in a chaise, and asked her many questions. This old lady seemed to have taken a fancy to her from the moment she saw her playing outside the cottage.

'Perhaps God has sent her to look after the child when I am gone,' thought Natalya, for the task of going down and up the stairs to get this letter read made her feel as if she would never go up and down them again.

Beaten at last, she took to her bed. Her next-room neighbour, the cobbler's wife, tended her and sent for the 'penny doctor.' But she would not have word written to Daisy or her holiday cut short. On the day Daisy was to come back she insisted, despite all advice and warning, in being up and dressed. She sent everybody away, and lay on her bed till she heard Daisy's footsteps, then she started to her feet, and drew herself up in pretentious good health. But the sound of other footsteps, and the entry of a spectacled, silver-haired old gentlewoman with the child, spoiled her intended hug. Daisy's new friend had passed from her memory, and she stared pathetically at the

strange lady and the sunburnt child.

'Oh, grandmother, what great eyes you've got!' And Daisy ran laughingly towards her.

The usual repartee was wanting.

'And the room is not tidied up,' Natalya said reproachfully, and began dusting a chair for the visitor. But the old lady waved it aside.

'I have come to thank you for all you have done for my grandchild.'

'_Your_ grandchild?' Natalya fell back on the bed.

'Yes. I have had inquiries made--it is quite certain. Daisy was even called after me. I am glad of that, at least.' Her voice faltered.

Natalya sat as bolt upright as years of bending under sacks would allow.

'And you have come to take her from me!' she shrieked.

Already Daisy's new ruddiness seemed to her the sign of life that belonged elsewhere.

'No, no, do not be alarmed. I have suffered enough from my selfishness. It was my bad temper drove my daughter from me.' She bowed her silver head till her form seemed as bent as Natalya's. 'What can I do to repair--to atone? Will you not come and live with me in the country, and let me care for you? I am not rich, but I can offer you every comfort.'

Natalya shook her head. 'I am a Jewess. I could not eat with you.'

'That's just what _I_ told her, grandmother,' added Daisy eagerly.

'Then the child must remain with you at my expense,' said the old lady.

'But if she likes the country so----' murmured Natalya.

'I like you better, grandmother.' And Daisy laid her ruddied cheek to the withered cheek, which grew wet with ecstasy.

'She calls _you_ "grandmother," not me,' said the old gentlewoman with a sob.

'Yes, and I wished her mother dead. God forgive me!'

Natalya burst into a passion of tears and rocked to and fro, holding Daisy tightly to her faintly pulsing heart.

'What did you say?' Daisy's grandmother flamed and blazed with her ancient anger. 'You wished my Madge dead?'

Natalya nodded her head. Her arms unloosed their hold of Daisy. 'Dead, dead, dead,' she repeated in a strange, crooning voice. Gradually a vacant look crept over her face, and she fell back again on the bed. She looked suddenly very old, despite her glossy black wig.

'She is ill!' Daisy shrieked.

The cobbler's wife ran in and helped to put her back between the sheets, and described volubly her obstinacy in leaving her bed. Natalya lived till near noon of the next day, and Daisy's real grandmother was with her still at the end, side by side with the Jewish death-watcher.

About eleven in the morning Natalya said: 'Light the candles, Daisy, the Sabbath is coming in.' Daisy spread a white tablecloth on the old wooden table, placed the copper candlesticks upon it, drew it to the bedside, and lighted the candles. They burned with curious unreality in the full August sunshine.

A holy peace overspread the old-clo' woman's face. Her dried-up lips mumbled the Hebrew prayer, welcoming the Sabbath eve. Gradually they grew rigid in death.

'Daisy,' said her grandmother, 'say the text I taught you.'

"'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,'" sobbed the child obediently, "'and I will give you rest.'"

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THE ICE PALACE

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

The sunlight dripped over the house like golden paint over an art jar, and the freckling shadows here and there only intensified the rigor of the bath of light. The Butterworth and Larkin houses flanking were entrenched behind great stodgy trees; only the Happer house took the full sun, and all day long faced the dusty road-street with a tolerant kindly patience. This was the city of Tarleton in southernmost Georgia, September afternoon.

Up in her bedroom window Sally Carrol Happer rested her nineteen-year-old chin on a fifty-two-year-old sill and watched Clark Darrow's ancient Ford turn the corner. The car was hot--being partly metallic it retained all the heat it absorbed or evolved--and Clark Darrow sitting bolt upright at the wheel wore a pained, strained expression as though he considered himself a spare part, and rather likely to break. He laboriously crossed two dust ruts, the wheels squeaking indignantly at the encounter, and then with a terrifying expression he gave the steering-gear a final wrench and deposited self and car approximately in front of the Happer steps. There was a heaving sound, a death-rattle, followed by a short silence; and then the air was rent by a startling whistle.

Sally Carrol gazed down sleepily. She started to yawn, but finding this quite impossible unless she raised her chin from the window-sill, changed her mind and continued silently to regard the car, whose owner sat brilliantly if perfunctorily at attention as he waited for an answer to his signal. After a moment the whistle once more split the dusty air.

"Good mawnin'."

With difficulty Clark twisted his tall body round and bent a distorted glance on the window.

"Tain't mawnin', Sally Carrol."

"Isn't it, sure enough?"

"What you doin'?"

"Eatin' 'n apple."

"Come on go swimmin'--want to?"

"Reckon so."

"How 'bout hurryin' up?"

"Sure enough."

Sally Carrol sighed voluminously and raised herself with profound inertia from the floor where she had been occupied in alternately destroyed parts of a green apple and painting paper dolls for her younger sister. She approached a mirror, regarded her expression with a pleased and pleasant languor, dabbed two spots of rouge on her lips and a grain of powder on her nose, and covered her bobbed corn-colored hair with a rose-littered sunbonnet. Then she kicked over the painting water, said, "Oh, damn!"--but let it lay--and left the room.

"How you, Clark?" she inquired a minute later as she slipped nimbly over the side of the car.

"Mighty fine, Sally Carrol."

"Where we go swimmin'?"

"Out to Walley's Pool. Told Marylyn we'd call by an' get her an' Joe Ewing."

Clark was dark and lean, and when on foot was rather inclined to stoop. His eyes were ominous and his expression somewhat petulant except when startlingly illuminated by one of his frequent smiles. Clark had "a income"--just enough to keep himself in ease and his car in gasoline--and he had spent the two years since he graduated from Georgia Tech in dozing round the lazy streets of his home town, discussing how he could best invest his capital for an immediate fortune.

Hanging round he found not at all difficult; a crowd of little girls had grown up beautifully, the amazing Sally Carrol foremost among them; and they enjoyed being swum with and danced with and made love to in the flower-filled summery evenings--and they all liked Clark immensely. When feminine company palled there were half a dozen other youths who were always just about to do something, and meanwhile were quite willing to join him in a few holes of golf, or a game of billiards, or the consumption of a quart of "hard yella licker." Every once in a while one of these contemporaries made a farewell round of calls before going up to

New York or Philadelphia or Pittsburgh to go into business, but mostly they just stayed round in this languid paradise of dreamy skies and firefly evenings and noisy nigger street fairs--and especially of gracious, soft-voiced girls, who were brought up on memories instead of money.

The Ford having been excited into a sort of restless resentful life Clark and Sally Carrol rolled and rattled down Valley Avenue into Jefferson Street, where the dust road became a pavement; along opiate Millicent Place, where there were half a dozen prosperous, substantial mansions; and on into the down-town section. Driving was perilous here, for it was shopping time; the population idled casually across the streets and a drove of low-moaning oxen were being urged along in front of a placid street-car; even the shops seemed only yawning their doors and blinking their windows in the sunshine before retiring into a state of utter and finite coma.

"Sally Carrol," said Clark suddenly, "it a fact that you're engaged?"

She looked at him quickly.

"Where'd you hear that?"

"Sure enough, you engaged?"

"At's a nice question!"

"Girl told me you were engaged to a Yankee you met up in Asheville last summer."

Sally Carrol sighed.

"Never saw such an old town for rumors."

"Don't marry a Yankee, Sally Carrol. We need you round here."

Sally Carrol was silent a moment.

"Clark," she demanded suddenly, "who on earth shall I marry?"

"I offer my services."

"Honey, you couldn't support a wife," she answered cheerfully. "Anyway, I know you too well to fall in love with you."

"At doesn't mean you ought to marry a Yankee," he persisted.

"S'pose I love him?"

He shook his head.

"You couldn't. He'd be a lot different from us, every way."

He broke off as he halted the car in front of a rambling, dilapidated house. Marylyn Wade and Joe Ewing appeared in the doorway.

"'Lo Sally Carrol."

"Hi!"

"How you-all?"

"Sally Carrol," demanded Marylyn as they started off again, "you engaged?"

"Lawdy, where'd all this start? Can't I look at a man 'thout everybody in town engagin' me to him?"

Clark stared straight in front of him at a bolt on the clattering wind-shield.

"Sally Carrol," he said with a curious intensity, "don't you 'like us?"

"What?"

"Us down here?"

"Why, Clark, you know I do. I adore all you boys."

"Then why you gettin' engaged to a Yankee?."

"Clark, I don't know. I'm not sure what I'll do, but--well, I want to go places and see people. I want my mind to grow. I want to live where things happen on a big scale."

"What you mean?"

"Oh, Clark, I love you, and I love Joe here and Ben Arrot, and you-all, but you'll--you'll---"

"We'll all be failures?"

"Yes. I don't mean only money failures, but just sort of--of ineffectual and sad, and--oh, how can I tell you?"

"You mean because we stay here in Tarleton?"

"Yes, Clark; and because you like it and never want to change things or think or go ahead."

He nodded and she reached over and pressed his hand.

"Clark," she said softly, "I wouldn't change you for the world. You're sweet the way you are. The things that'll make you fail I'll love always--the living in the past, the lazy days and nights you have, and all your carelessness and generosity."

"But you're goin' away?"

"Yes--because I couldn't ever marry you. You've a place in my heart no one else ever could have, but tied down here I'd get restless. I'd feel I was--wastin' myself. There's two sides to me, you see. There's the sleepy old side you love an' there's a sort of energy--the feeling that makes me do wild things. That's the part of me that may be useful somewhere, that'll last when I'm not beautiful any more."

She broke off with characteristic suddenness and sighed, "Oh, sweet cooky!" as her mood changed.

Half closing her eyes and tipping back her head till it rested on the seat-back she let the savory breeze fan her eyes and ripple the fluffy curls of her bobbed hair. They were in the country now, hurrying between tangled growths of bright-green coppice and grass and tall trees that sent sprays of foliage to hang a cool welcome over the road. Here and there they passed a battered negro cabin, its oldest white-haired inhabitant smoking a corncob pipe beside the door, and half a dozen scantily clothed pickaninnies parading tattered dolls on the wild-grown grass in front. Farther out were lazy cotton-fields where even the workers seemed intangible shadows lent by the sun to the earth, not for toil, but to while away some age-old tradition in the golden September fields. And round the drowsy picturesqueness, over the trees and shacks and muddy rivers, flowed the heat, never hostile, only comforting, like a great warm nourishing bosom for the infant earth.

"Sally Carrol, we're here!"

"Poor chile's soun' asleep."

"Honey, you dead at last outa sheer laziness?"

"Water, Sally Carrol! Cool water waitin' for you!"

Her eyes opened sleepily.

"Hi!" she murmured, smiling.

II

In November Harry Bellamy, tall, broad, and brisk, came down from his Northern city to spend four days. His intention was to settle a matter that had been hanging fire since he and Sally Carrol had met in Asheville, North Carolina, in midsummer. The settlement took only a quiet afternoon and an evening in front of a glowing open fire, for Harry Bellamy had everything she wanted; and, beside, she loved him--loved him with that side of her she kept especially for loving. Sally Carrol had several rather clearly defined sides.

On his last afternoon they walked, and she found their steps tending half-unconsciously toward one of her favorite haunts, the cemetery. When it came in sight, gray-white and golden-green under the cheerful late sun, she paused, irresolute, by the iron gate.

"Are you mournful by nature, Harry?" she asked with a faint smile.

"Mournful?" Not I."

"Then let's go in here. It depresses some folks, but I like it."

They passed through the gateway and followed a path that led through a wavy valley of graves--dusty-gray and mouldy for the fifties; quaintly carved with flowers and jars for the seventies; ornate and hideous for the nineties, with fat marble cherubs lying in sodden sleep on stone pillows, and great impossible growths of nameless granite flowers.

Occasionally they saw a kneeling figure with tributary flowers, but over most of the graves lay silence and withered leaves with only the fragrance that their own shadowy memories could waken in living minds.

They reached the top of a hill where they were fronted by a tall, round head-stone, freckled with dark spots of damp and half grown over with vines.

"Margery Lee," she read; "1844-1873. Wasn't she nice? She died when she was twenty-nine. Dear Margery Lee," she added softly. "Can't you see her, Harry?"

"Yes, Sally Carrol."

He felt a little hand insert itself into his.

"She was dark, I think; and she always wore her hair with a ribbon in it, and gorgeous hoop-skirts of Alice blue and old rose."

"Yes."

"Oh, she was sweet, Harry! And she was the sort of girl born to stand on a wide, pillared porch and welcome folks in. I think perhaps a lot of men went away to war meanin' to come back to her; but maybe none of 'em ever did."

He stooped down close to the stone, hunting for any record of marriage.

"There's nothing here to show."

"Of course not. How could there be anything there better than just 'Margery Lee,' and that eloquent date?"

She drew close to him and an unexpected lump came into his throat as her yellow hair brushed his cheek.

"You see how she was, don't you Harry?"

"I see," he agreed gently. "I see through your precious eyes. You're beautiful now, so I know she must have been."

Silent and close they stood, and he could feel her shoulders trembling a little. An ambling breeze swept up the hill and stirred the brim of her floppidy hat.

"Let's go down there!"

She was pointing to a flat stretch on the other side of the hill where along the green turf were a thousand grayish-white crosses

stretching in endless, ordered rows like the stacked arms of a battalion.

"Those are the Confederate dead," said Sally Carrol simply.

They walked along and read the inscriptions, always only a name and a date, sometimes quite indecipherable.

"The last row is the saddest--see, 'way over there. Every cross has just a date on it and the word 'Unknown.'"

She looked at him and her eyes brimmed with tears.

"I can't tell you how real it is to me, darling--if you don't know."

"How you feel about it is beautiful to me."

"No, no, it's not me, it's them--that old time that I've tried to have live in me. These were just men, unimportant evidently or they wouldn't have been 'unknown'; but they died for the most beautiful thing in the world--the dead South. You see," she continued, her voice still husky, her eyes glistening with tears, "people have these dreams they fasten onto things, and I've always grown up with that dream. It was so easy because it was all dead and there weren't any disillusionments comin' to me. I've tried in a way to live up to those past standards of noblesse oblige--there's just the last remnants of it, you know, like the roses of an old garden dying all round us--streaks of strange courtliness and chivalry in some of these boys an' stories I used to hear from a Confederate soldier who lived next door, and a few old darkies. Oh, Harry, there was something, there was something! I couldn't ever make you understand but it was there."

"I understand," he assured her again quietly.

Sally Carol smiled and dried her eyes on the tip of a handkerchief protruding from his breast pocket.

"You don't feel depressed, do you, lover? Even when I cry I'm happy here, and I get a sort of strength from it."

Hand in hand they turned and walked slowly away. Finding soft grass she drew him down to a seat beside her with their backs against the remnants of a low broken wall.

"Wish those three old women would clear out," he complained. "I want to kiss you, Sally Carrol."

"Me, too."

They waited impatiently for the three bent figures to move off, and then she kissed him until the sky seemed to fade out and all her smiles and tears to vanish in an ecstasy of eternal seconds.

Afterward they walked slowly back together, while on the corners twilight played at somnolent black-and-white checkers with the end of day.

"You'll be up about mid-January," he said, "and you've got to stay a month at least. It'll be slick. There's a winter carnival on, and if you've never really seen snow it'll be like fairy-land to you. There'll be skating and skiing and tobogganing and sleigh-riding, and all sorts of torchlight parades on snow-shoes. They haven't had one for years, so they're gong to make it a knock-out."

"Will I be cold, Harry?" she asked suddenly.

"You certainly won't. You may freeze your nose, but you won't be shivery cold. It's hard and dry, you know."

"I guess I'm a summer child. I don't like any cold I've ever seen."

She broke off and they were both silent for a minute.

"Sally Carol," he said very slowly, "what do you say to--March?"

"I say I love you."

"March?"

"March, Harry."

III

All night in the Pullman it was very cold. She rang for the porter to ask for another blanket, and when he couldn't give her one she tried vainly, by squeezing down into the bottom of her berth and doubling back the bedclothes, to snatch a few hours' sleep. She wanted to look her best in the morning.

She rose at six and sliding uncomfortably into her clothes stumbled up to the diner for a cup of coffee. The snow had filtered into the vestibules and covered the door with a slippery coating. It was intriguing this cold, it crept in everywhere. Her breath was quite visible and she blew into the air with a naive enjoyment. Seated in the diner she stared out the window at white hills and valleys and scattered pines whose every branch was a green platter for a cold feast of snow. Sometimes a solitary farmhouse would fly by, ugly and bleak and lone on the white waste; and with each one she had an instant of chill compassion for the souls shut in there waiting for spring.

As she left the diner and swayed back into the Pullman she experienced a surging rush of energy and wondered if she was feeling the bracing air of which Harry had spoken. This was the North, the North--her land now!

"Then blow, ye winds, heighho!
A-roving I will go,"

she chanted exultantly to herself.

"What's 'at?" inquired the porter politely.

"I said: 'Brush me off.'"

The long wires of the telegraph poles doubled, two tracks ran up beside the train--three--four; came a succession of white-roofed houses, a glimpse of a trolley-car with frosted windows, streets--more streets--the city.

She stood for a dazed moment in the frosty station before she saw three fur-bundled figures descending upon her.

"There she is!"

"Oh, Sally Carrol!"

Sally Carrol dropped her bag.

"Hi!"

A faintly familiar icy-cold face kissed her, and then she was in a group of faces all apparently emitting great clouds of heavy smoke; she was shaking hands. There were Gordon, a short, eager man of thirty who looked like an amateur knocked-about model for Harry, and his wife, Myra, a listless lady with flaxen hair under a fur automobile cap. Almost immediately Sally Carrol thought of

her as vaguely Scandinavian. A cheerful chauffeur adopted her bag, and amid ricochets of half-phrases, exclamations and perfunctory listless "my dears" from Myra, they swept each other from the station.

Then they were in a sedan bound through a crooked succession of snowy streets where dozens of little boys were hitching sleds behind grocery wagons and automobiles.

"Oh," cried Sally Carrol, "I want to do that! Can we Harry?"

"That's for kids. But we might---"

"It looks like such a circus!" she said regretfully.

Home was a rambling frame house set on a white lap of snow, and there she met a big, gray-haired man of whom she approved, and a lady who was like an egg, and who kissed her--these were Harry's parents. There was a breathless indescribable hour crammed full of self-sentences, hot water, bacon and eggs and confusion; and after that she was alone with Harry in the library, asking him if she dared smoke.

It was a large room with a Madonna over the fireplace and rows upon rows of books in covers of light gold and dark gold and shiny red. All the chairs had little lace squares where one's head should rest, the couch was just comfortable, the books looked as if they had been read--some--and Sally Carrol had an instantaneous vision of the battered old library at home, with her father's huge medical books, and the oil-paintings of her three great-uncles, and the old couch that had been mended up for forty-five years and was still luxurious to dream in. This room struck her as being neither attractive nor particularly otherwise. It was simply a room with a lot of fairly expensive things in it that all looked about fifteen years old.

"What do you think of it up here?" demanded Harry eagerly. "Does it surprise you? Is it what you expected I mean?"

"You are, Harry," she said quietly, and reached out her arms to him.

But after a brief kiss he seemed to extort enthusiasm from her.

"The town, I mean. Do you like it? Can you feel the pep in the air?"

"Oh, Harry," she laughed, "you'll have to give me time. You can't

just fling questions at me."

She puffed at her cigarette with a sigh of contentment.

"One thing I want to ask you," he began rather apologetically; "you Southerners put quite an emphasis on family, and all that--not that it isn't quite all right, but you'll find it a little different here. I mean--you'll notice a lot of things that'll seem to you sort of vulgar display at first, Sally Carrol; but just remember that this is a three-generation town. Everybody has a father, and about half of us have grandfathers. Back of that we don't go."

"Of course," she murmured.

"Our grandfathers, you see, founded the place, and a lot of them had to take some pretty queer jobs while they were doing the founding. For instance there's one woman who at present is about the social model for the town; well, her father was the first public ash man--things like that."

"Why," said Sally Carol, puzzled, "did you s'pose I was goin' to make remarks about people?"

"Not at all," interrupted Harry, "and I'm not apologizing for any one either. It's just that--well, a Southern girl came up here last summer and said some unfortunate things, and--oh, I just thought I'd tell you."

Sally Carrol felt suddenly indignant--as though she had been unjustly spanked--but Harry evidently considered the subject closed, for he went on with a great surge of enthusiasm.

"It's carnival time, you know. First in ten years. And there's an ice palace they're building new that's the first they've had since eighty-five. Built out of blocks of the clearest ice they could find--on a tremendous scale."

She rose and walking to the window pushed aside the heavy Turkish portieres and looked out.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly. "There's two little boys makin' a snow man! Harry, do you reckon I can go out an' help 'em?"

"You dream! Come here and kiss me."

She left the window rather reluctantly.

"I don't guess this is a very kissable climate, is it? I mean, it makes you so you don't want to sit round, doesn't it?"

"We're not going to. I've got a vacation for the first week you're here, and there's a dinner-dance to-night."

"Oh, Harry," she confessed, subsiding in a heap, half in his lap, half in the pillows, "I sure do feel confused. I haven't got an idea whether I'll like it or not, an' I don't know what people expect, or anythin'. You'll have to tell me, honey."

"I'll tell you," he said softly, "if you'll just tell me you're glad to be here."

"Glad--just awful glad!" she whispered, insinuating herself into his arms in her own peculiar way. "Where you are is home for me, Harry."

And as she said this she had the feeling for almost the first time in her life that she was acting a part.

That night, amid the gleaming candles of a dinner-party, where the men seemed to do most of the talking while the girls sat in a haughty and expensive aloofness, even Harry's presence on her left failed to make her feel at home.

"They're a good-looking crowd, don't you think?" he demanded. "Just look round. There's Spud Hubbard, tackle at Princeton last year, and Junie Morton--he and the red-haired fellow next to him were both Yale hockey captains; Junie was in my class. Why, the best athletes in the world come from these States round here. This is a man's country, I tell you. Look at John J. Fishburn!"

"Who's he?" asked Sally Carrol innocently.

"Don't you know?"

"I've heard the name."

"Greatest wheat man in the Northwest, and one of the greatest financiers in the country."

She turned suddenly to a voice on her right.

"I guess they forget to introduce us. My name's Roger Patton."

"My name is Sally Carrol Happer," she said graciously.

"Yes, I know. Harry told me you were coming."

"You a relative?"

"No, I'm a professor."

"Oh," she laughed.

"At the university. You're from the South, aren't you?"

"Yes; Tarleton, Georgia."

She liked him immediately--a reddish-brown mustache under watery blue eyes that had something in them that these other eyes lacked, some quality of appreciation. They exchanged stray sentences through dinner, and she made up her mind to see him again.

After coffee she was introduced to numerous good-looking young men who danced with conscious precision and seemed to take it for granted that she wanted to talk about nothing except Harry.

"Heavens," she thought, "They talk as if my being engaged made me older than they are--as if I'd tell their mothers on them!"

In the South an engaged girl, even a young married woman, expected the same amount of half-affectionate badinage and flattery that would be accorded a debutante, but here all that seemed banned. One young man after getting well started on the subject of Sally Carrol's eyes and, how they had allured him ever since she entered the room, went into a violent convulsion when he found she was visiting the Bellamys--was Harry's fiancée. He seemed to feel as though he had made some risque and inexcusable blunder, became immediately formal and left her at the first opportunity.

She was rather glad when Roger Patton cut in on her and suggested that they sit out a while.

"Well," he inquired, blinking cheerily, "how's Carmen from the South?"

"Mighty fine. How's--how's Dangerous Dan McGrew? Sorry, but he's the only Northerner I know much about."

He seemed to enjoy that.

"Of course," he confessed, "as a professor of literature I'm not

supposed to have read Dangerous Dan McGrew."

"Are you a native?"

"No, I'm a Philadelphian. Imported from Harvard to teach French. But I've been here ten years."

"Nine years, three hundred an' sixty-four days longer than me."

"Like it here?"

"Uh-huh. Sure do!"

"Really?"

"Well, why not? Don't I look as if I were havin' a good time?"

"I saw you look out the window a minute ago--and shiver."

"Just my imagination," laughed Sally Carroll "I'm used to havin' everythin' quiet outside an' sometimes I look out an' see a flurry of snow an' it's just as if somethin' dead was movin'"

He nodded appreciatively.

"Ever been North before?"

"Spent two Julys in Asheville, North Carolina."

"Nice-looking crowd aren't they?" suggested Patton, indicating the swirling floor.

Sally Carrol started. This had been Harry's remark.

"Sure are! They're--canine."

"What?"

She flushed.

"I'm sorry; that sounded worse than I meant it. You see I always think of people as feline or canine, irrespective of sex."

"Which are you?"

"I'm feline. So are you. So are most Southern men an' most of these girls here."

"What's Harry?"

"Harry's canine distinctly. All the men I've to-night seem to be canine."

"What does canine imply? A certain conscious masculinity as opposed to subtlety?"

"Reckon so. I never analyzed it--only I just look at people an' say 'canine' or 'feline' right off. It's right absurd I guess."

"Not at all. I'm interested. I used to have a theory about these people. I think they're freezing up."

"What?"

"Well, they're growing' like Swedes--Ibsenesque, you know. Very gradually getting gloomy and melancholy. It's these long winters. Ever read Ibsen?"

She shook her head.

"Well, you find in his characters a certain brooding rigidity. They're righteous, narrow, and cheerless, without infinite possibilities for great sorrow or joy."

"Without smiles or tears?"

"Exactly. That's my theory. You see there are thousands of Swedes up here. They come, I imagine, because the climate is very much like their own, and there's been a gradual mingling. There're probably not half a dozen here to-night, but--we've had four Swedish governors. Am I boring you?"

"I'm mighty interested."

"Your future sister-in-law is half Swedish. Personally I like her, but my theory is that Swedes react rather badly on us as a whole. Scandinavians, you know, have the largest suicide rate in the world."

"Why do you live here if it's so depressing?"

"Oh, it doesn't get me. I'm pretty well cloistered, and I suppose books mean more than people to me anyway."

"But writers all speak about the South being tragic. You know--Spanish señoritas, black hair and daggers an' haunting

music."

He shook his head.

"No, the Northern races are the tragic races--they don't indulge in the cheering luxury of tears."

Sally Carrol thought of her graveyard. She supposed that that was vaguely what she had meant when she said it didn't depress her.

"The Italians are about the gayest people in the world--but it's a dull subject," he broke off. "Anyway, I want to tell you you're marrying a pretty fine man."

Sally Carrol was moved by an impulse of confidence.

"I know. I'm the sort of person who wants to be taken care of after a certain point, and I feel sure I will be."

"Shall we dance? You know," he continued as they rose, "it's encouraging to find a girl who knows what she's marrying for. Nine-tenths of them think of it as a sort of walking into a moving-picture sunset."

She laughed and liked him immensely.

Two hours later on the way home she nestled near Harry in the back seat.

"Oh, Harry," she whispered "it's so co-old!"

"But it's warm in here, daring girl."

"But outside it's cold; and oh, that howling wind!"

She buried her face deep in his fur coat and trembled involuntarily as his cold lips kissed the tip of her ear.

IV

The first week of her visit passed in a whirl. She had her promised toboggan-ride at the back of an automobile through a chill January twilight. Swathed in furs she put in a morning tobogganing on the country-club hill; even tried skiing, to sail through the air for a glorious moment and then land in a tangled

laughing bundle on a soft snow-drift. She liked all the winter sports, except an afternoon spent snow-shoeing over a glaring plain under pale yellow sunshine, but she soon realized that these things were for children--that she was being humored and that the enjoyment round her was only a reflection of her own.

At first the Bellamy family puzzled her. The men were reliable and she liked them; to Mr. Bellamy especially, with his iron-gray hair and energetic dignity, she took an immediate fancy, once she found that he was born in Kentucky; this made of him a link between the old life and the new. But toward the women she felt a definite hostility. Myra, her future sister-in-law, seemed the essence of spiritless conversationality. Her conversation was so utterly devoid of personality that Sally Carrol, who came from a country where a certain amount of charm and assurance could be taken for granted in the women, was inclined to despise her.

"If those women aren't beautiful," she thought, "they're nothing. They just fade out when you look at them. They're glorified domestics. Men are the centre of every mixed group."

Lastly there was Mrs. Bellamy, whom Sally Carrol detested. The first day's impression of an egg had been confirmed--an egg with a cracked, veiny voice and such an ungracious dumpiness of carriage that Sally Carrol felt that if she once fell she would surely scramble. In addition, Mrs. Bellamy seemed to typify the town in being innately hostile to strangers. She called Sally Carrol "Sally," and could not be persuaded that the double name was anything more than a tedious ridiculous nickname. To Sally Carrol this shortening of her name was presenting her to the public half clothed. She loved "Sally Carrol"; she loathed "Sally." She knew also that Harry's mother disapproved of her bobbed hair; and she had never dared smoke down-stairs after that first day when Mrs. Bellamy had come into the library sniffing violently.

Of all the men she met she preferred Roger Patton, who was a frequent visitor at the house. He never again alluded to the Ibsenesque tendency of the populace, but when he came in one day and found her curled upon the sofa bent over "Peer Gynt" he laughed and told her to forget what he'd said--that it was all rot.

They had been walking homeward between mounds of high-piled snow and under a sun which Sally Carrol scarcely recognized. They passed a little girl done up in gray wool until she resembled a small Teddy bear, and Sally Carrol could not resist a gasp of maternal appreciation.

"Look! Harry!"

"What?"

"That little girl--did you see her face?"

"Yes, why?"

"It was red as a little strawberry. Oh, she was cute!"

"Why, your own face is almost as red as that already! Everybody's healthy here. We're out in the cold as soon as we're old enough to walk. Wonderful climate!"

She looked at him and had to agree. He was mighty healthy-looking; so was his brother. And she had noticed the new red in her own cheeks that very morning.

Suddenly their glances were caught and held, and they stared for a moment at the street-corner ahead of them. A man was standing there, his knees bent, his eyes gazing upward with a tense expression as though he were about to make a leap toward the chilly sky. And then they both exploded into a shout of laughter, for coming closer they discovered it had been a ludicrous momentary illusion produced by the extreme bagginess of the man's trousers.

"Reckon that's one on us," she laughed.

"He must be Southerner, judging by those trousers," suggested Harry mischievously.

"Why, Harry!"

Her surprised look must have irritated him.

"Those damn Southerners!"

Sally Carrol's eyes flashed.

"Don't call 'em that."

"I'm sorry, dear," said Harry, malignantly apologetic, "but you know what I think of them. They're sort of--sort of degenerates--not at all like the old Southerners. They've lived so long down there with all the colored people that they've gotten lazy and shiftless."

"Hush your mouth, Harry!" she cried angrily. "They're not! They may be lazy--anybody would be in that climate--but they're my best friends, an' I don't want to hear 'em criticised in any such sweepin' way. Some of 'em are the finest men in the world."

"Oh, I know. They're all right when they come North to college, but of all the hangdog, ill-dressed, slovenly lot I ever saw, a bunch of small-town Southerners are the worst!"

Sally Carrol was clenching her gloved hands and biting her lip furiously.

"Why," continued Harry, if there was one in my class at New Haven, and we all thought that at last we'd found the true type of Southern aristocrat, but it turned out that he wasn't an aristocrat at all--just the son of a Northern carpetbagger, who owned about all the cotton round Mobile."

"A Southerner wouldn't talk the way you're talking now," she said evenly.

"They haven't the energy!"

"Or the somethin' else."

"I'm sorry Sally Carrol, but I've heard you say yourself that you'd never marry---"

"That's quite different. I told you I wouldn't want to tie my life to any of the boys that are round Tarleton now, but I never made any sweepin' generalities."

They walked along in silence.

"I probably spread it on a bit thick Sally Carrol. I'm sorry."

She nodded but made no answer. Five minutes later as they stood in the hallway she suddenly threw her arms round him.

"Oh, Harry," she cried, her eyes brimming with tears; "let's get married next week. I'm afraid of having fusses like that. I'm afraid, Harry. It wouldn't be that way if we were married."

But Harry, being in the wrong, was still irritated.

"That'd be idiotic. We decided on March."

The tears in Sally Carrol's eyes faded; her expression hardened slightly.

"Very well--I suppose I shouldn't have said that."

Harry melted.

"Dear little nut!" he cried. "Come and kiss me and let's forget." That very night at the end of a vaudeville performance the orchestra played "Dixie" and Sally Carrol felt something stronger and more enduring than her tears and smiles of the day brim up inside her. She leaned forward gripping the arms of her chair until her face grew crimson.

"Sort of get you dear?" whispered Harry.

But she did not hear him. To the limited throb of the violins and the inspiring beat of the kettle-drums her own old ghosts were marching by and on into the darkness, and as fifes whistled and sighed in the low encore they seemed so nearly out of sight that she could have waved good-by.

"Away, Away,
 Away down South in Dixie!
Away, away,
 Away down South in Dixie!"

V

It was a particularly cold night. A sudden thaw had nearly cleared the streets the day before, but now they were traversed again with a powdery wraith of loose snow that travelled in wavy lines before the feet of the wind, and filled the lower air with a fine-particled mist. There was no sky-- only a dark, ominous tent that draped in the tops of the streets and was in reality a vast approaching army of snowflakes--while over it all, chilling away the comfort from the brown-and-green glow of lighted windows and muffling the steady trot of the horse pulling their sleigh, interminably washed the north wind. It was a dismal town after all, she thought, dismal.

Sometimes at night it had seemed to her as though no one lived here--they had all gone long ago--leaving lighted houses to be covered in time by tombing heaps of sleet. Oh, if there should be snow on her grave! To be beneath great piles of it all winter

long, where even her headstone would be a light shadow against light shadows. Her grave--a grave that should be flower-strewn and washed with sun and rain.

She thought again of those isolated country houses that her train had passed, and of the life there the long winter through--the ceaseless glare through the windows, the crust forming on the soft drifts of snow, finally the slow cheerless melting and the harsh spring of which Roger Patton had told her. Her spring--to lose it forever--with its lilacs and the lazy sweetness it stirred in her heart. She was laying away that spring--afterward she would lay away that sweetness.

With a gradual insistence the storm broke. Sally Carrol felt a film of flakes melt quickly on her eyelashes, and Harry reached over a furry arm and drew down her complicated flannel cap. Then the small flakes came in skirmish-line, and the horse bent his neck patiently as a transparency of white appeared momentarily on his coat.

"Oh, he's cold, Harry," she said quickly.

"Who? The horse? Oh, no, he isn't. He likes it!"

After another ten minutes they turned a corner and came in sight of their destination. On a tall hill outlined in vivid glaring green against the wintry sky stood the ice palace. It was three stories in the air, with battlements and embrasures and narrow icicled windows, and the innumerable electric lights inside made a gorgeous transparency of the great central hall. Sally Carrol clutched Harry's hand under the fur robe.

"It's beautiful!" he cried excitedly. "My golly, it's beautiful, isn't it! They haven't had one here since eighty-five!"

Somehow the notion of there not having been one since eighty-five oppressed her. Ice was a ghost, and this mansion of it was surely peopled by those shades of the eighties, with pale faces and blurred snow-filled hair.

"Come on, dear," said Harry.

She followed him out of the sleigh and waited while he hitched the horse. A party of four--Gordon, Myra, Roger Patton, and another girl--drew up beside them with a mighty jingle of bells. There were quite a crowd already, bundled in fur or sheepskin, shouting and calling to each other as they moved through the snow, which was now so thick that people could scarcely be

distinguished a few yards away.

"It's a hundred and seventy feet tall," Harry was saying to a muffled figure beside him as they trudged toward the entrance; "covers six thousand square yards."

"She caught snatches of conversation: "One main hall"--"walls twenty to forty inches thick"--"and the ice cave has almost a mile of--"--"this Canuck who built it---"

They found their way inside, and dazed by the magic of the great crystal walls Sally Carrol found herself repeating over and over two lines from "Kubla Khan":

"It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!"

In the great glittering cavern with the dark shut out she took a seat on a wooded bench and the evening's oppression lifted. Harry was right--it was beautiful; and her gaze travelled the smooth surface of the walls, the blocks for which had been selected for their purity and dearness to obtain this opalescent, translucent effect.

"Look! Here we go--oh, boy! " cried Harry.

A band in a far corner struck up "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!" which echoed over to them in wild muddled acoustics, and then the lights suddenly went out; silence seemed to flow down the icy sides and sweep over them. Sally Carrol could still see her white breath in the darkness, and a dim row of pale faces over on the other side.

The music eased to a sighing complaint, and from outside drifted in the full-throated remnant chant of the marching clubs. It grew louder like some paean of a viking tribe traversing an ancient wild; it swelled--they were coming nearer; then a row of torches appeared, and another and another, and keeping time with their moccasined feet a long column of gray-mackinawed figures swept in, snow-shoes slung at their shoulders, torches soaring and flickering as their voice rose along the great walls.

The gray column ended and another followed, the light streaming luridly this time over red toboggan caps and flaming crimson mackinaws, and as they entered they took up the refrain; then came a long platoon of blue and white, of green, of white, of brown and yellow.

"Those white ones are the Wacouta Club," whispered Harry eagerly.
"Those are the men you've met round at dances."

The volume of the voices grew; the great cavern was a phantasmagoria of torches waving in great banks of fire, of colors and the rhythm of soft-leather steps. The leading column turned and halted, platoon deploys in front of platoon until the whole procession made a solid flag of flame, and then from thousands of voices burst a mighty shout that filled the air like a crash of thunder, and sent the torches wavering. It was magnificent, it was tremendous! To Sally Carol it was the North offering sacrifice on some mighty altar to the gray pagan God of Snow. As the shout died the band struck up again and there came more singing, and then long reverberating cheers by each club. She sat very quiet listening while the staccato cries rent the stillness; and then she started, for there was a volley of explosion, and great clouds of smoke went up here and there through the cavern--the flash-light photographers at work--and the council was over. With the band at their head the clubs formed in column once more, took up their chant, and began to march out.

"Come on!" shouted Harry. "We want to see the labyrinths down-stairs before they turn the lights off!"

They all rose and started toward the chute--Harry and Sally Carrol in the lead, her little mitten buried in his big fur gantlet. At the bottom of the chute was a long empty room of ice, with the ceiling so low that they had to stoop--and their hands were parted. Before she realized what he intended Harry Harry had darted down one of the half-dozen glittering passages that opened into the room and was only a vague receding blot against the green shimmer.

"Harry!" she called.

"Come on!" he cried back.

She looked round the empty chamber; the rest of the party had evidently decided to go home, were already outside somewhere in the blundering snow. She hesitated and then darted in after Harry.

"Harry!" she shouted.

She had reached a turning-point thirty feet down; she heard a faint muffled answer far to the left, and with a touch of panic fled toward it. She passed another turning, two more yawning

alleys.

"Harry!"

No answer. She started to run straight forward, and then turned like lightning and sped back the way she had come, enveloped in a sudden icy terror.

She reached a turn--was it here?--took the left and came to what should have been the outlet into the long, low room, but it was only another glittering passage with darkness at the end. She called again, but the walls gave back a flat, lifeless echo with no reverberations. Retracing her steps she turned another corner, this time following a wide passage. It was like the green lane between the parted water of the Red Sea, like a damp vault connecting empty tombs.

She slipped a little now as she walked, for ice had formed on the bottom of her overshoes; she had to run her gloves along the half-slippery, half-sticky walls to keep her balance.

"Harry!"

Still no answer. The sound she made bounced mockingly down to the end of the passage.

Then on an instant the lights went out, and she was in complete darkness. She gave a small, frightened cry, and sank down into a cold little heap on the ice. She felt her left knee do something as she fell, but she scarcely noticed it as some deep terror far greater than any fear of being lost settled upon her. She was alone with this presence that came out of the North, the dreary loneliness that rose from ice-bound whalers in the Arctic seas, from smokeless, trackless wastes where were strewn the whitened bones of adventure. It was an icy breath of death; it was rolling down low across the land to clutch at her.

With a furious, despairing energy she rose again and started blindly down the darkness. She must get out. She might be lost in here for days, freeze to death and lie embedded in the ice like corpses she had read of, kept perfectly preserved until the melting of a glacier. Harry probably thought she had left with the others--he had gone by now; no one would know until next day. She reached pitifully for the wall. Forty inches thick, they had said--forty inches thick!

On both sides of her along the walls she felt things creeping, damp souls that haunted this palace, this town, this North.

"Oh, send somebody--send somebody!" she cried aloud.

Clark Darrow--he would understand; or Joe Ewing; she couldn't be left here to wander forever--to be frozen, heart, body, and soul. This her-- this Sally Carrol! Why, she was a happy thing. She was a happy little girl. She liked warmth and summer and Dixie. These things were foreign--foreign.

"You're not crying," something said aloud. "You'll never cry any more. Your tears would just freeze; all tears freeze up here!"

She sprawled full length on the ice.

"Oh, God!" she faltered.

A long single file of minutes went by, and with a great weariness she felt her eyes dosing. Then some one seemed to sit down near her and take her face in warm, soft hands. She looked up gratefully.

"Why it's Margery Lee" she crooned softly to herself. "I knew you'd come." It really was Margery Lee, and she was just as Sally Carrol had known she would be, with a young, white brow, and wide welcoming eyes, and a hoop-skirt of some soft material that was quite comforting to rest on.

"Margery Lee."

It was getting darker now and darker--all those tombstones ought to be repainted sure enough, only that would spoil 'em, of course. Still, you ought to be able to see 'em.

Then after a succession of moments that went fast and then slow, but seemed to be ultimately resolving themselves into a multitude of blurred rays converging toward a pale-yellow sun, she heard a great cracking noise break her new-found stillness.

It was the sun, it was a light; a torch, and a torch beyond that, and another one, and voices; a face took flesh below the torch, heavy arms raised her and she felt something on her cheek--it felt wet. Some one had seized her and was rubbing her face with snow. How ridiculous--with snow!

"Sally Carrol! Sally Carrol!"

It was Dangerous Dan McGrew; and two other faces she didn't know. "Child, child! We've been looking for you two hours! Harry's

half-crazy!"

Things came rushing back into place--the singing, the torches, the great shout of the marching clubs. She squirmed in Patton's arms and gave a long low cry.

"Oh, I want to get out of here! I'm going back home. Take me home"---her voice rose to a scream that sent a chill to Harry's heart as he came racing down the next passage--"to-morrow!" she cried with delirious, unstrained passion--"To-morrow! To-morrow! To-morrow!"

VI

The wealth of golden sunlight poured a quite enervating yet oddly comforting heat over the house where day long it faced the dusty stretch of road. Two birds were making a great to-do in a cool spot found among the branches of a tree next door, and down the street a colored woman was announcing herself melodiously as a purveyor of strawberries. It was April afternoon.

Sally Carrol Happer, resting her chin on her arm, and her arm on an old window-seat, gazed sleepily down over the spangled dust whence the heat waves were rising for the first time this spring. She was watching a very ancient Ford turn a perilous corner and rattle and groan to a jolting stop at the end of the walk. See made no sound and in a minute a strident familiar whistle rent the air. Sally Carrol smiled and blinked.

"Good mawnin'."

A head appeared tortuously from under the car-top below.

"Tain't mawnin', Sally Carrol."

"Sure enough!" she said in affected surprise. "I guess maybe not."

"What you doin'?"

"Eatin' a green peach. 'Spect to die any minute."

Clark twisted himself a last impossible notch to get a view of her face.

"Water's warm as a kettla steam, Sally Carol. Wanta go swimmin'?"

"Hate to move," sighed Sally Carol lazily, "but I reckon so."

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by F. Scott Fitzgerald



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Jack London

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Charles Egbert Craddock

AKA Mary Noailles Murfree (January 24, 1850 – July 31, 1922) was an American fiction writer of novels and short stories who wrote under the pen name Charles Egbert Craddock.

(from Wikipedia profile, source of above photo of 'Craddock'.)

Hector 'Saki' Munro

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Henry James

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George Arnold

(Wikipedia profile)

